# THE GHOST TRAIN

RUTH ALEXANDER

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BY

RUTH ALEXANDER

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# PART I

# THE GHOST TRAIN

## CHAPTER I

Captain Edward Gascoigne Morrison, M. C., D. S. O., formerly of His Majesty's Welsh Fusiliers, but since his war service transferred to the Foreign Department of the Secret Service, looked round at the chaos of the shattered studio, and then at the figure of the girl who still sat, with the look of a frightened dove, crouched upon the model's throne in the corner.

There had been a struggle. The floor of the great room, skylighted by an immense dust-encrusted window in the roof, lay thick with smashed pieces of sculpture and white with trodden clay and plaster-of-Paris. One small window at the side of this studio, which was on the ground floor of a back street in Cologne, allowed the thin rays of a winter sun to look in as if enquiringly on the scene of devastation. A chair standing in a semi-crippled condition on three legs — the fourth had been wrenched off and lay at some distance from the rest of its body — and a pair of torn green velvet cur-

tains that were huddled, still attached to pole and rings, before the model's throne, added to the general wreckage.

Teddie Morrison had got control of his breath again, and he stood eyeing the girl narrowly.

"Well? Where do *you* come into all this?"

In spite of himself and his suspicions he asked the question with a certain air of gallantry, almost of deference. She looked so forlorn, so helpless, and so strangely beautiful with that frightened-dove look in her eyes. Eyes of misty blue, almost grey, they were, and dilated beneath the straight black brows in terror and despair, with a gleam of hope somewhere in their depths as she leaned forward eagerly.

"I don't know! I know nothing of these people! I am just a model. I was sitting waiting for Mr. d'Alvarez when all those men burst in. I'm so frightened! Help me — do help me!" She clasped her hands beseechingly.

Morrison crossed his arms with a deliberate gesture. He was not certain of the girl in spite of her air of innocence. She was too unexpectedly beautiful. He judged that she was probably a decoy; one of that gang of international rogues they had traced to Cologne and he had been detailed to ferret out. Just a beautiful foil to throw dust in the eyes of any

young member of the Secret Service who happened to be impressionable; and, like the hounds they were, they had left her in the lurch, left her to shift for herself and get out of the mess as best she might. On the other hand she might be a willing accomplice, though somehow that idea seemed to him fantastic.

"What is it all about?" she begged him in an agitated voice. "Everything happened so quickly — and I was behind the curtains till some one dragged them down — I didn't see ——"

She clutched the draperies that enveloped her slender figure more tightly about her; and Morrison remembered that that length of shimmering silk was probably her only covering. He turned his back on her and spoke over his shoulder, curtly enough.

"Go and get dressed, in that cupboard in the corner, where your clothes are. Then we'll talk."

She slid off the chair with a swift backward glance and descended the steps of the throne, picking her way among the débris on the floor; Morrison heard the patter of her bare feet as she crossed it, heard the closing of the door of the little room in the corner, then turned to face it, one hand in his coat pocket.

He glanced round with his keen, bright, pene-

trating eyes, then with a quick movement of his left hand drew from his other pocket a small roll of greyish substance. It might have been putty, it might have been a lump of dough made with fingers that had not been washed. He held it in his hand a moment and looked down at it reflectively; then, as the sound of the opening door reached his ears, thrust it back hastily into his pocket.

The girl's eyes, as she came over the studio floor towards him, were lowered to the bulge that little package within his hand made in his left pocket. They seemed fascinated by it; they were still held as she halted in front of him.

"Won't you please," she said after a moment, earnestly, pressing her hands together again, "explain all this, and then let me go home?" Her eyes were raised imploringly, innocently, to his.

"Home? Do you live here? What are you, an English girl, doing as a sculptor's model in Cologne?"

"I live with my father," she said simply. "He — we are very poor, and I consented to sit to Mr. d'Alvarez — oh, I hated it! — to help him. My father doesn't know. He thinks I'm working at a dressmaker's. I couldn't bear him to know."

"Poor kid!" Again in spite of himself and his better judgement, Morrison's heart was touched. He

couldn't stand women's tears, and she was beginning to cry. "There, there," he went on hastily, and patted her shoulder. She dabbed her eyes, blew her nose, and returned the shred of linen that was her handkerchief to the black silk vanity bag she carried.

He searched her face, trying to read if there was anything hidden there, but she met his eyes with a brave, firm glance. "Poor little devil!" he thought commiseratingly. "Bad job for her — I'd hate to be making a mistake about her, but still ——"

Aloud, he said gravely: "Tell me all you know about this business."

"This business? But I don't know anything! I only know that Mr. d'Alvarez told me to come at ten o'clock as usual, and when I got here a few minutes early, two of his friends (they often came, I knew them quite well) were sitting talking in the studio — those that the policemen (I suppose they were policemen, though there was so much German talk that I couldn't understand) handcuffed and took away. Oh, there must be some awful mistake! I chatted with them a few minutes and then went away and un — got ready for Mr. d'Alvarez. He was frequently a few minutes late. I was behind the screen when he came in and most of the rest happened."

"You don't know then," Morrison said slowly

— for the life of him he couldn't believe the girl was anything but innocent — " that this room has been used for the last three months as the headquarters of one of the most famous gangs of international crooks—if not worse—and that the police have been watching it night and day for weeks?"

" This room?" She looked round, wide-eyed with terror. " It can't be! This sculptor's studio!"

" And that we've just recovered the famous Oppenhaupt diamonds in this very room, hidden in a lump of soft clay?" He patted his pocket.

" Here? Impossible!" But again her eyes were rivetted on that pocket. " Here? And I —— "

She suddenly swayed limply and would have fallen to the floor if Morrison's right arm had not shot out protectively and held her safe. She felt very small and slim in his grasp, and a slight thrill ran through him at the contact, though he said sternly enough:

" Come, now! Don't faint, it would never do!"

" No, no—I'm not going to faint." She straightened up with an effort and released herself from his arm. " It was such a shock." All at once she looked at him again, startled by a new thought. " But I can go — you're not —— "

" I'm afraid," Morrison said gently, " it'll be a duty to arrest you on suspicion of being an accomplice of these people."

"*Arrest me!*"

She whispered the words as if stricken with a horror too great for speech. "No, no, you can't — you mustn't! Not that!"

"Don't worry, you'll be able to clear yourself easily, I've no doubt. We'll wait a few minutes for Jackson, my chief assistant, to come back from seeing those crooks in safe keeping, and then ——"

"Then?" she scarcely breathed the word.

He gave a little reassuring laugh.

"Then—we'll go to your father, and everything can be put right. But I'm bound to make enquiries, you know." The detective spoke almost apologetically. There was something magnetic about the proximity of this girl; he felt suddenly but strongly that he wanted to protect her, to place her in safe keeping. It was such a damned shame ——

"Yes," she agreed faintly, but nevertheless, she glanced round with wide eyes as if surreptitiously seeking some way of escape.

He watched her narrowly. Was she, after all, entirely innocent? Did she actually know nothing, or was she indeed a tool of that nefarious crowd? He would have staked his life at that moment that she was not a willing accessory. He made a shot at a venture.

"When they gave you that lump of clay to bring

to the studio, didn't you guess there might be something inside it?"

"No — why should I?"

"Ah! You *did* bring it then?" he said sharply.

She shrank away from him, silent, confused, panic-stricken before those penetrating eyes. Her own dropped. The lashes, he noticed, were very thick and black, as black as the hair that smoothly outlined the shape of her head and caressed her temples. She held her little grey-blue hat in a hand that trembled. He wanted to take it in his own, to still its quivering, but he repressed the urge.

"Sometimes," she admitted in a low voice, "they gave me small quantities of a special sort of clay D'Alvarez used for modelling, to bring to him."

"They?" he studied her closely.

"Schnitz — and the others. Sculptor friends of his. Their studio is at ——"

"Yes — I know all about those studios! The scoundrels! No more sculptors than I am. Those pieces of clay contained valuable gems — probably the whole Oppenhaupt collection, worth a hundred thousand — stolen last May from their London house."

Her straightforward statement had convinced him, against his better judgement, that the girl was innocent in spite of appearances; he reached out

a hand and put it reassuringly on her shoulder.

"Don't worry, little girl; I'll see you through this. We've got most of the gang and I think their little schemes are nearly at an end. You'll trust me, won't you?"

Her beautiful eyes swam in tears as they met his.

"Oh, thank you — thank you! It's all so queer ——"

"Yes, it is — very queer." His voice was grim. "We've been working on this crowd for months in conjunction with the German police. This is only one of their little adventures. If I'm not mistaken, they're flying for higher game than this collection of jewels, valuable as they are."

"Higher game? What?"

The detective shook his head. He suddenly realised that he had already talked more than he ought to this girl, for a man whose business it was to distrust everybody; but there was something about those eyes of hers, something so queerly compelling ——

"I'm afraid I'm not at liberty to disclose that. Anyway, they're only suspicions; we've no evidence as yet."

She was silent a moment, apparently lost in thought; then she gave a sigh as if she had all at

once become alive again to the peril of the situation in which she found herself.

"Please," she begged anxiously, "mayn't I go now?"

"Directly. Jackson should be back — " Then he glanced down at his wrist-watch. It was hard to meet those eyes and deny her any request; he took refuge in the coward's part of avoiding them, and almost as if she divined that by the uncanny sixth sense women possess, she laid her small hand on his arm and shook it gently, inviting his attention to meeting her glance again.

"He should be back now," Morrison remarked, a little uneasily. "He had only to — ah!"

Footsteps sounded in the wooden corridor outside, and an instant later the door was thrown open. Jackson, a burly, middle-aged, grey-moustached sergeant of police, stood before them. He was panting as though he had been running, and he checked the words on his lips as he caught sight of the girl.

"A moment with you, sir," he said hurriedly, and gave a sideways nod of the head towards the corridor.

Morrison slipped outside into the passage, holding the door half-closed behind him.

"Well?" he said briskly.

"We lost two of 'em, sir, I'm afraid," Jackson

announced with philosophical calm. "One of 'em had some snuff in his pocket, and before we could get the bracelets on him he'd chucked it in the constables' faces and made off. In the crowd of the Neumarkt they were gone in a moment. The slickest lot I've ever been up against," he finished lugubriously.

"Damnation!" Morrison was decidedly disappointed and perturbed at the intelligence, and was at no pains to hide the fact. "That's a bad blow, Jackson. A very bad blow. Which two?"

"Schnitz and D'Alvarez, I'm afraid, sir."

The detective groaned. He stood nonplussed a moment; the lines of his good-looking young face set hard and firmly. It was devilish hard luck, just as he was pulling off the biggest scoop of his career, a scoop that would mean promotion and set him firmly on the next rung of the ladder; hard luck indeed! He hauled himself together with an effort.

"You did all you could, Jackson — it wasn't your fault, though it's a bit of a staggerer. We've bagged most of the jewels, anyway. Got the rest of 'em all safe?"

"Safe as houses, sir. We'll get 'em across as soon as the extradition warrant arrives. What about the young female, sir?" He jerked a thumb towards the studio.

"I'll see to her. She's not one of them, but I'm going to make a few enquiries," Morrison replied noncommittally.

"Right, sir." Jackson strode off down the passage again, and the detective pushed the door open and went back into the studio. Then he gave an exclamation of dismayed surprise. The room was empty.

## CHAPTER II

MORRISON stood in the middle of the studio and glanced quickly about him, dazed for a moment by this second shock following on Jackson's piece of bad news; then he stepped over the pieces of broken statuary and furniture to the small inner room, a mere cupboard in the wall, where the girl had dressed. That also was bare. There was, in fact, nothing whatever in it but a few pegs on the wall and a broken looking-glass. He darted across to the narrow window, and there, at his feet, was the clue to her disappearance.

He stooped and picked it up, the small hat she had held in her hand; a grey-blue cloth or soft felt, the same colour as those dove-grey eyes. The window was only wide enough to admit of the passage of a very slender little body such as hers. It was too small for his shoulders; he had to lean out sideways, and, as he had foreseen, the quick glances he threw right and left were unproductive of result. She had completely vanished, and the street in which the studio was situated (one of those tortuous, dark and narrow lanes of the old inner town, at

one end of which he could catch a glimpse of the medieval towers of the Neumarkt) was now, at mid-day, almost empty of pedestrians. In the distance showed the colossal equestrian statue of Frederick, gilded by the weak rays of the November sun. The house was almost in a corner; the street, in fact, practically a cul-de-sac.

He withdrew his head, puzzled and oddly depressed; and with the grey hat still in his hand tried to school his brain to a little heavy thinking.

What a fool he had been to trust a woman's eyes! It might, he thought grimly, be that she was the key to the whole problem, now that the principal movers in the game, the man known as Herr Otto Schnitz, and the other, his colleague, Rupert d'Alvarez, had got free again. They were, as he well knew, the head and brains of the whole concern; and with that girl in his hands — if indeed she did not prove herself the innocent she claimed to be, and her flight seemed to give that supposition the lie — he might yet have run them to earth. Now ——

He turned back to the room with a sigh, thrusting the little hat into the capacious coat pocket which already held a small roll of soft china clay, and trying to put the memory of those frightened eyes away from him. For the next hour he submitted the room that had been long used as the head-

quarters of the gang in the guise of a studio to the most rigorous search. The only pieces of plaster works, masks, and casts of limbs left intact after the struggle (and they were obviously cheap, machine-made things designed to throw enquirers off the scent) that had ensued on the entrance of the police, he smashed to atoms, dissecting each rigorously; and when he strolled carelessly off the premises, giving a casual and scarcely perceptible nod to two lolling figures bracing up the pillars of the front door as he passed, he was satisfied that he had got all that was likely to be useful to him out of the place. But the grey eyes haunted him uneasily as he made his way back to his hotel.

He found Philip Heath, a young assistant of his, busily writing at a small table by the window as he entered the rather dingy room on the first floor of the second-rate hotel they occupied in an obscure street. Heath was a merry-looking boy of twenty-four or thereabouts, freckled, blue-eyed, and generally with an air of regarding life as one enormous joke. Morrison and he were greatly attached to each other, and had been concerned together in a variety of adventures in that underworld of crime in which it was their business—and Heath's intense pleasure — to move.

" Heath," he said, " give me a large *Bock*. An

immense *Bock*. I need it, old son." He threw his hat on the table and dropped wearily into a chair by the stove, neglecting to remove his overcoat.

Heath rose to ring the bell for the waiter.

"Two large *Bocks?*" he amended cheerfully.

"Thanks — I *could* do with two."

"Oh, I say! One was for me — *Three* large *Bocks*," he ordered with a wide grin as the waiter appeared, and came and stood by the mantelpiece, looking down with affectionate concern at his friend's tired figure.

"Don't worry, Captain. We haven't done so badly, y'know. The Chief will be no end pleased about the diamonds. That was the job, after all, wasn't it? The recovery of the stones."

"Glad you think so." Morrison sounded despondent. "I feel completely bunkered. Germany's a big place to hide in. Of course we've got all the stations watched, as well as the docks and the airway stations, but it's hardly likely they'll try the obvious means of escape, and it may be weeks before we pick up the threads again. We're pretty certain to get those two, eventually, of course, but — ah!" He broke off as the waiter entered with the drinks, and lifting one of the three tall glasses from the tray, drained it.

"That's better. You see, Heath, as Jackson prob-

ably informed you, there's a third party. They've been using a girl as a go-between; she's been smuggling fortunes in jewels across the city hidden in pieces of soft clay. Well, she got off, too. Slipped away while my attention was engaged with Jackson for half a minute."

Heath whistled. "Little apples! A girl, eh? That's the devil! Girls are so beastly clever."

"Whether she's a party to the goings-on, I can't say. I'm inclined to think she's a mere dupe. Now, she apparently managed to drop out of that window in that so-called studio, and make off down the street without those two boobs guarding the door spotting her. How d'you suppose she did it, Heath?"

"Either she was extremely spry, or else they're in league with the police," Heath suggested. "These Germans have never given us more assistance than they were obliged to, Captain, that's a certainty."

Morrison, sunk deep in his chair, chin on chest, remained thoughtfully silent.

"Anyhow," he said presently, "I propose — unless I'm recalled — to stay in Cologne for a bit and try and get on the track of 'em. There's nothing much for you to do here, Heath, and I think you'd better get back to London. You've been no end of a help to me, but there doesn't seem much more you can do. Any letters or orders?"

Heath crossed to the table, picked up and handed to him a few papers.

"These messages came ten minutes ago on the private wire. The Chief seems to think that that policeman's death down in Cornwall is worth looking into, when we're through here. Seems to think it's important — of course, I'd much rather be here with you, Captain," he added boyishly, "but if you think ——"

"Better toddle off by the night boat," Morrison advised. "Rather queer case, that chap being discovered with his head bashed in on a lonely Cornish road." He handed the papers back after examining them; rose, and went to the window, looking out absently.

"There's one thing makes me believe that girl's innocent," he reverted to the former conversation, speaking slowly with his back towards his friend. "She was — undressed, ready for sitting as a model to that fake sculptor. Rather too realistic a performance if it was all a put-up job, don't you agree? You see there was no necessity for the — the altogether; he could just have been modelling her hands, or her feet, or her head. But still, one never knows. Women *are* beastly clever, as you so wisely remark, Heath."

Heath said nothing for a moment. He was watch-

ing the detective with a certain amount of anxiety. This despondent mood was a new one to him, rather alarming in one so keenly capable of sizing up the various values in a situation, so philosophically suspicious of everybody, even of the most blatantly innocent, and withal so cool-headed and even-tempered. Something seemed to have happened to the Captain that had rather badly shaken him, hardly accountable for by the escape of those thieves. That was all in the day's work, serious though it might be; for Morrison certainly could never be accused of negligence in the performance of his duty.

The boy was rather puzzled and worried on his friend's account. A thought struck him. He voiced it, impulsively.

"Morrison, you don't *want* to believe her guilty?"

Teddie turned from the window and looked straight into the other man's eyes.

"I don't, Heath, and that's the truth."

"Little apples!" murmured Heath in an amazed whisper.

. . . . .

"Get me the Yard, will you, Grube?"

Captain Morrison had arrived at his rooms in Adam Street, Adelphi, three days later, in response

to a wire from the Chief; tubbed and shaved after his journey back from Cologne, as he sat looking over some letters in his comfortable little sitting-room, the detective presented the appearance of a well-groomed, good-looking, energetic young man with a capacity for work. There was a concentration in the eye, a squareness of the jaw, and a set determination of the mouth, which albeit exhibited a certain humour and a sweetness of temper to which Grube, who had been his batman in the war and had remained with Teddie Morrison ever since, could bear witness.

"You're through, sir."

Morrison put down the envelope he was slitting and took the receiver from Grube's hand.

"Hallo, Chief, that you? Morrison speaking. Yes, sir, just back, crossed by the night boat. Nothing very urgent? Very well, I'll be round to report in an hour's time, but I thought you'd better know I'd arrived."

He heard the Chief's voice saying genially:

"Good. I suppose you think you're a whale of a feller having nabbed those stones, eh?"

Morrison gave a rueful chuckle.

"On the contrary, I'm feeling like a particularly small-sized sprat just now, sir. You know the two heads of the gang gave us the slip — got away

in that jabbering crowd of foreigners in the square — completely diddled us."

"So I gathered. I suppose you have taken the necessary steps?"

"Oh, rather. You'll have seen Jackson already. We'll get 'em yet. We seem to have rounded up the rest pretty thoroughly." He hesitated the merest trifle; and the Chief appeared to read something significant into that hesitation at the other end of the line.

"Got 'em all, you think, except Schnitz and D'Alvarez? Anybody else?"

Morrison paused a moment before replying.

"There was a woman," he said; and the figure of the girl with the frightened eyes rose visibly before him as he spoke.

"Ah!"

"But I don't think she was anything more than a tool," he went on with suspiciously elaborate nonchalance. "She got away anyhow. Slipped out of the window while my back was turned for a second talking to Jackson, who'd returned with news of the escape."

"Ah!" The Chief's voice sounded cool and deliberate as he repeated the word. He had had the whole story from Jackson, of course. "Doesn't look like innocence, does it?"

"I admit it doesn't, Chief; but still I've got a feeling ——"

"Doesn't do to have feelings where women of that sort are concerned. Take my advice, young feller, cut 'em out. And now, another piece of advice. You've been working pretty hard lately, Morrison. Take a few weeks' holiday; you'll come back all the fitter."

"But I'm perfectly fit, sir!"

Morrison was startled; his heart dropped. He knew what that suggestion meant coming from the Chief at such a moment. It conveyed, delicately and genially enough, the fact that the Chief didn't consider his work quite up to that pitch of concentrated service on the job that was required. It meant that the Chief recognised no excuse for letting those two master-criminals slide out of the net; that the capture of the jewels themselves was but a secondary consideration in comparison with the urgency of stopping the evil at its source. It meant that he had given the young detective a job just a little bit too heavy for him; and that he had — well, not quite failed, perhaps — but that the Chief's confidence had not been so perfectly placed as he had thought it to be.

"And I'm in the middle of the business, Chief,"

he urged. "I don't want to let go at this juncture — I'd like to finish my job."

"You'll come back all the fresher, my boy, and have your chance yet." The voice, kindly still, was emphatic enough, and Morrison knew it was no good kicking against the pricks. His heart dropped a further inch or two.

"Or get onto some light thing if you don't want a rest," the Chief advised. "What about that Cornish business?"

"I've got Heath onto that." Teddie could not keep the disappointment from his voice. To offer him the solving of some small affair connected with a policeman's death in a remote country village which would in all probability turn out to be a "natural causes" matter, when he was in the throes of working on one of the biggest hauls of the time! He must have failed badly indeed in the Chief's eyes.

"Well, good-bye, Morrison. I'll be here to see you about twelve, when you can give me all your details. Meantime, think over my advice. 'Bye!"

Morrison replaced the receiver slowly.

He felt quite badly shaken by the Chief's attitude. Thinking it over, he realised it was after his mention of the girl that he had got that nasty little

piece of " advice "— advice which was, as he well knew, a very definite command. Surely the Chief didn't think she had anything to do with the escape — didn't imagine him neglecting his duty because he was blinded by a woman's eyes!

Anyhow, the Chief had administered a most emphatic snub, just in a moment, too, when he was thinking he hadn't done so badly. That necklace of diamonds alone was supposed to be worth forty thousand pounds. Still, he had to admit the very fact of its value was earnest of the gravity of the thieves' escape. They were abroad in the world to conduct even more nefarious schemes — and it was he, Morrison, who had been given the chance as a brilliant young member of the Foreign Department, to bring them to earth.

He was chagrined to the core.

" A telegram for you, sir," Grube's voice behind him cut into these unpleasant meditations.

Morrison broke the seal almost mechanically and read. Then he leaped to his feet.

" Good God!" he cried aghast. " Heath — he's been found dead!"

# CHAPTER III

"THAT alters the whole complexion of the affair. In following up the matter of that Truro Staff man's death, Heath stumbled on this legend. A mere silly rumour of a haunted railway station among a lot of superstitious country folk, is one thing; and murder — first the murder of P. C. Davies, and then the death of poor Heath on the very platform — is another." The Chief frowned heavily at the pink flimsy he held in his hand. "If it *was* murder."

"Heath was my best assistant and one of the finest boys that ever walked," said Morrison dejectedly. "I feel as though I've lost a brother, Chief. It's my belief that there's something more in that tale than meets the eye. We hadn't even had time for a report on his investigations. Obviously, in spite of his tramp's disguise, his movements were noticed, and he wasn't wanted nosing about." He added, "I think, Chief, I'll take that holiday you offered me — in Cornwall."

"Fine," returned the big man with the kindly eyes sitting behind a great desk in his office in Scotland Yard. "Fine. You may be on a bigger thing than we thought, Morrison. Good luck to you."

"Thanks." Morrison's voice was a little bitter.

He rose from his chair. "By the way, who've you put on the Schnitz affair, Chief?"

"Barlow," replied the other, and added in an almost apologetic tone, "he's had a lot of experience in these cases, as you know."

The Chief hadn't upbraided him — hadn't even hinted that he considered the detective's Cologne adventure had been a failure, but Morrison knew only too well that for the moment, at any rate, he would be given no more big chances. And Barlow happened to be the one man of all others he would hate to see straighten out a piece of work he had messed up!

"Show up in about a month's time," the elder man advised in a friendly manner, "unless, of course, anything of real interest has come along in the meantime. And if you want any men ——"

"Thanks, Chief. Not just now," Morrison returned. "I think I'll take the afternoon train down and have a bit of a look round on my own first, if you agree, in my private capacity."

"Right." The Chief extended a hand and shook the other's warmly. He sighed. He knew just how badly Morrison was feeling, and was sorry for him. These boys had to be taught their duty — they were like the captains of ships, and however small the vessel or however large, they were responsible for

the safety of the whole outfit or the minutest part of it; and perhaps, after all, he had been mistaken in regarding Morrison as one of his most promising disciples. And obviously he had been badly hit by that wire about young Heath. A pity that. He sighed again, shook his head, and pressed a bell on his table.

"Tell that Press Association feller to step up," he ordered crisply to the clerk who appeared in answer to his summons.

. . . . .

"Put a few things together for me, Grube. I'm off for a holiday on my own."

"Very good, sir."

Teddie Morrison, catching the three-thirty from Paddington, arrived in Truro a little before half-past ten that evening. An empty carriage towards the end of the journey had given him the opportunity to affix a small black moustache to his lip, and to don a pair of smoked tortoise-shell rimmed spectacles, effectively changing his appearance. He observed that, by some oversight, or perhaps by a delicate pretence at not noticing its presence — Grube had left the little grey-blue felt hat in his valise. It cheered his heavy heart curiously.

He slept late, and descending to the coffee-room

of the cheap hotel he had chosen, much affected by commercial travellers, he picked up a *Daily Mail* whilst waiting for his breakfast to be brought. His eye was immediately caught by an inch-deep headline the length of the front page:

CLEVER HAUL OF THIEVES' BOOTY

and beneath in smaller letters:

PORTION OF OPPENHAUPT £100,000 DIAMONDS RECOVERED
YOUNG DETECTIVE'S SCOOP

His eye travelled down the page and he read:

"We are informed by Scotland Yard to-day that the recovery of a large portion of the booty stolen from Mr. Isaac Oppenhaupt's London mansion has been achieved through the instrumentality of Captain Edward G. Morrison, a young and promising member of the Foreign Section of the C. I. D. Secret Service. The capture of a necklace, the gem of the collection ——"

There was only one forlorn-looking gentleman of the road engaged in picking his teeth after his meal at a table near the window, as Morrison saw by a quick glance, and he allowed himself the softly uttered exclamation of amazement, "Well, I'm damned!"

He wondered what the deuce the Chief was playing at! It was rather like him to pay a backhanded compliment of that sort, he thought, with a glow of gratitude; though nothing much in his attitude at their interview had given Morrison to understand that the Cologne business had been anything but the most dismal failure. Still, there was no fathoming the Chief's methods about anything. One just trusted him implicitly and did as one was told and took the crumbs he threw one. But coming as it did at that precise moment, when he was feeling bitterly downhearted about Heath, the Chief's loyalty sent a warm glow through him.

That little piece of praise, unmerited though it might be, lightened his heart most considerably as he set out for his destination, the station of Fal Vale where his pal and understudy had so mysteriously met his end. It made him determined to use every ounce of his brain and strength to fathom the mystery. Decent of the Chief!

No one else alighted at the little junction, and he found himself the solitary occupant of the platform on a soft November morning, with the exception of the station-master who appeared to be guard, porter, ticket-collector, and everything else connected with the working of the remote little country station on the Great Western, and who eyed him

suspiciously out of a pair of ferrety-green eyes half hidden beneath bushy, grizzled eyebrows that, in conjunction with a hawk-beak of a nose, gave him a vague likeness to some evil bird of prey.

"How far is the village?" Morrison asked, tendering his ticket.

"Village? There bain't no village 'ere," responded the man, regarding him sourly, as if in his opinion the solitary passenger had no business to have got out of the train at all.

"What? No village?" Morrison stumped the small bag he was carrying down on the platform, with an air of exasperation. "Well, I'm ——"

"No use swerin', young man. There bain't no village and that's all there is to it." The station-master turned sternly on his heel.

"Wait a bit. My firm wouldn't have sent me if there hadn't been any people here, and people must eat, even at Fal Vale." The traveller was trotting persistently and rather pathetically at the heels of the other as he spoke. "*You* must eat. Now what about interesting you in this new Patent Food ——?" He was fumbling with the catch of his bag as he spoke.

"Patent Food!" The station-master turned with a disgusted glance. "And what do 'ee think I wants wi' they muck? There *aren't* no people within miles

and we gets all the food we requires 'ere from T'uro by carrier, once a week, and we bakes our own bread an' milks our own cows. Patent Food!" He sniffed contemptuously.

"Oh, well ——" Teddie Morrison closed the bag again. "I suppose I must just wait here till the train to Exeter comes along. You've been getting quite notorious, I hear," he added genially. "Had a little murder all on your own a few days ago, the papers say, Mr. —— what might your name be?"

"My name's Hodgkin, Saul Hodgkin," the other informed him heavily, in a tone that conveyed the impression that it was almost an impertinence to enquire. "An' it warn't a murder at all. The Lunnon newspapers always do get everythin' wrong side up. Anybody in this 'ere neighbourhood could tell 'ee what killed that tramp in our very waiting-room."

"No! Do tell me! It'll liven up the weary wait. This *is* the waiting-room, I suppose." He walked in and Mr. Hodgkin surveyed him disagreeably from the door. "It sounds exciting!" The commercial traveller peered through his dark glasses in lively anticipation.

"Excitin'! You must come from outlandish parts, young man, if you bain't 'eard tell as 'ow this station's 'aunted!"

"Haunted!" Teddie burst into an incredulous laugh. "Really now, things like that don't happen in these days, you know."

"Don't laugh, sir. They 'appen 'ere right enough. Years ago there was a 'orrible accident near this station, and the place 'as been bewitched ever since. They do say, that once a month, the phantom of that ghostly train rushes through this 'ere station an' *kills* whoever sees it pass."

There was no mistaking the solemnity of the station-master's voice.

"And your idea is that the tramp saw that train, and died in consequence?" Morrison laughed again derisively. "Sorry, my good man, but I really *can't* swallow that. It's a bit of a tall story now, isn't it?"

"Believe it or not, as *you* please," the station-master said steadily. "I warns everybody as I warns you now, not to linger about this place after dark, that's all, for their own sakes. Stranger things happen than men can account for sometimes. And now, good-day to you, sir. I've got my dinner to eat afore the next train's due, and I can't waste more time 'ere. *Your* train goes at two-thirty."

He trudged off down the platform, and Morrison watched him with narrowed eyes. Then he turned back to the waiting-room and taking off his

dark glasses, quickly made a general and particular survey of the place, including the ticket-office that gave off from it, a dark and dismal hole with apparently no other outlets than the pigeon-hole whence tickets were issued and (as he would not have observed but for the gleam of a thin, horizontal streak of light) perhaps twenty-four inches above the floor in a corner of the wooden wall, a hatchway a couple of feet square, used probably for the receipt of small parcels and to avoid carrying them round through the waiting-room.

Emerging, he gave another swift glance round the waiting-room, noticing the usual smoke-grimed windows, the neglected hearth in which there was the usual handful of fire burning, the dirty and out-of-date posters, advertising long-discontinued trips, stuck on the walls, the hard and uncompromising seats and the shiny central table that made up the ordinary equipment of waiting-rooms. Nothing to arouse one's suspicions there, certainly!

But as he left the short length of platform and turned through a gap in the iron railings to the chalk road, by the side of the little red-brick signal-box, he became suddenly aware of a pair of piercing greenish eyes under beetling brows that were watching him from round the corner of the signal-box.

The traveller in Patent Foods went on his casual way, whistling disarmingly, and looking about him with the vague interest that any one stranded in a one-eyed hole for a couple of hours, with nothing to break the monotony, takes in his surroundings.

Why was Saul Hodgkin taking so much interest in his movements? Why wasn't he getting his dinner, as he had announced his intention of doing?

# CHAPTER IV

THE watching eyes of Mr. Saul Hodgkin puzzled Teddie Morrison as he made his way from the station along a lonely stretch of road towards the sea, that showed a grey-blue mist between rocky promontories ahead of him. As grey-blue and misty as a pair of eyes he had left behind him in Cologne, but which seemed, nevertheless, to be continually present with him. He put the vision away resolutely now to face the matter in hand.

The road ended half a mile on in a small granite jetty that stuck out like a crooked finger pointing into the sea itself, and was apparently the only sort of harbour or breakwater the place could boast. A small fishing boat or two lay rocking in the water alongside; a few gulls circled round the rocks, calling their plaintive note; otherwise but for the lap of the waves there was silence, and no sign of humanity disturbed the general aloof remoteness of the place. Above, on the hillsides, white scars and conical piles of earth showed where mines, probably tin, had been worked. Now they were disused, but the old railway line with two black smudges, which he made out to be a couple of derelict trucks still standing on it

far up on the hill, wound its length from the jetty and around towards the summit, past the yawning cavities of the pits.

Three small stone cottages, perhaps fishermen's or discarded coastguard cottages, claimed his attention a hundred yards farther on along the sea-road. In the window of one he noticed a few packets of tea and a collection of fly-blown lemonade bottles. He pushed open the door; it set the bell clanging loudly. A small girl entered from an inner door and stood primly behind a tiny counter on which were arrayed four bottles of sweets, a diminutive pair of scales, and one or two loaves of bread.

"Good morning," Morrison began, when he was interrupted by a raucous voice shrilling from the interior of the place.

"If it's another tramp, Gladys, tell 'un to be off. We don't want no more o' them about the place."

"'Tain't a tramp, ma," the child called, and eyed the stranger with shy curiosity. A red-faced, stout woman with a wooden leg stumped into view and pushed the little girl aside.

"Beg pardon, sir, but we've been that bothered over the tramp that died up in the station that it's made us a bit suspicious-like."

"Ah! I heard something about that. What did he die of?" the stranger asked casually.

The red-faced woman shook her head. "If I could tell 'ee that, sir, I could tell the police that's been pesterin' me the last two days as well." Her voice dropped. "Folks do say that it had something to do with the hauntin' o' the station. You've heard about that, maybe?"

"The station-master mentioned something of it to me. But surely you don't believe that story?"

"Can't help but believe it, sir," she returned with a shake of the head. "You see, that poor fellow came in here once or twice, dead tired and hungry, and I gave him a bite and cup o' tea. An' for my pains I've been worritted nearly into my grave wi' questions ever since 'e was took. Nice young chap, too, though 'e *were* a down an' out. Can I serve you wi' something, sir? 'Tisn't rightly a shop, but I oblige people passing sometimes. 'Tis a lonely spot an' they're few enough."

Morrison bought sixpennyworth of peppermint drops and having failed to interest the good lady in Patent Foods, bid her good day.

It wasn't rightly a shop, as she had said — but why had the station-master so emphatically denied the existence of people in the vicinity? The presence of inquisitive strangers was evidently disliked at Fal Vale. What lay behind it?

The mere existence of a thoroughly accredited

ghost would hardly account for this anxiety on the part of the inhabitants to keep strangers away from the neighbourhood. On the contrary, the story might, if properly worked, have been regarded as an asset, calling attention to the place in a way more tangible advantages (such as "a bracing climate, sea-fishing, good bathing and magnificent views") could never have done. Obviously business acumen was lacking in the local residents.

And now, the notoriety of a sudden death by means unknown, on the very platform of the little station itself (P. C. Davies' sudden end had been hushed up, of course), was calculated to add to its unenviable reputation. It seemed a culminating step in the plan to keep unwanted visitors off the track — of what? Had poor Heath in his tramp's guise been the victim of some dastardly plot? Or was he, Morrison, letting imagination run away with him? In that mist-enwreathed and lonely bay, frowned over by lowering clouds, wailed over by hovering birds, almost anything seemed credible. Mystery seemed to be in the very air, he thought, as he climbed the sea-road and looked down over the waste of waters that held the secrets of countless generations, and up at the towering rocks that hovered over them to sentinel those same secrets. No wonder the place bred a race of superstitious peasantry!

But still, all that didn't account for the tragic death of poor Heath.

Morrison had nearly reached the summit of the slope that was steadily rising amid rock on one side and a tangle of undergrowth and leafless trees sheering down to the sea on the other, when two things happened. Turning one of the hairpin bends that had been made to allow of vehicular traffic up the hill, he came suddenly upon a large board placed across the mouth of a crevice in the cliff, obviously the opening to what appeared to be one of the disused mines, and bearing the words, "The Silverway Clay Works."

The odd thing was that the board appeared to have been newly painted.

In this region of derelict mines and the lifeless remains of a vanished industry, the effect was startlingly disconcerting; and while he stopped to stare, the second strange thing happened.

He heard a light step behind him, and there came into view round the bend he had just negotiated the figure of a girl. She passed him, and in doing so turned to stare in astonishment. Morrison found himself looking, through his smoked glasses, into a pair of blue-grey eyes, the colour of a dove's breast. There could be no mistaking them, for him — they were the eyes of the girl of the Cologne studio.

# CHAPTER V

He stood staring after her as, following that one look — and was he right in thinking that there crept into her glance a sudden light of fear? — she went on walking rapidly up the hilly road away from him. She was wearing a loose cloak that he could swear was of the same colour as the little hat that lay so snugly folded in a corner of his suit-case back at the Truro Hotel — thundery grey, nebulous as a cloud.

For a full minute Teddie Morrison was inclined to disbelieve the evidence of his own eyes. The next he had recovered his presence of mind and started after her.

But one can walk quite a long way in a minute, especially if some emotion resembling fright lends wings to one's feet.

So Teddie Morrison thought; but the fact was, absurd as it seemed, that all at once the girl in the grey cloak vanished from his sight as completely as if she had never been there. After the next corner (she had had that minute's start of him, of course), there was a long stretch of almost flat road ahead at the summit of the cliff — and nothing on it.

Teddie stopped in his tracks after a few minutes' frantic walking. He was completely mystified. Hang it all, it simply wasn't done, even in this ghost-infested district! Perhaps she was the ghost itself! He let slip a laugh of sheer nervous vexation at his thought and the futility of the thing. The ghost! The ghost that manned the train, the ghost that had killed Heath and the policeman! He looked back and forth, up and down the road which was now little more than a cliff path; up at the sky and down at the misty sea far below. He could see no outlet, no way by which she could have escaped his trained eye, unless she had slipped down the precipice among the undergrowth. And yet, there was the fact — she had been and was not. Perhaps all this business of ghosts was getting on his brain — perhaps, after all, he really *did* need that holiday the Chief insisted on his taking!

To add to his discomfiture, one of those Cornish mists that rise with such dramatic suddenness was taking possession of the world in a most annoying fashion. He knew it was useless to make any further investigation at the moment, and with a sigh of baffled reluctance, he retraced his steps towards the station, almost believing that the whole thing had been a dream.

He wished he had some one to talk to, to assure

him of the reality of existence; the Chief, or poor Heath — Heath had always had bright ideas.

The packet of chocolate he invariably provided himself with was real enough, anyhow, and he drew it from his pocket and ate as he walked, feeling hungry. The mist had closed in in good earnest and the train was waiting when he reached the platform. The station-master was not in evidence. He took his seat in an empty carriage. He was, so far as he could see, the only passenger again. Huddled in a corner, staring out through the windows at the obscuring white mist, he started some of that hard thinking the situation seemed to call for.

. . . . .

"I mean to get to the bottom of this business, Superintendent, and I am staying in the neighbourhood until I do — or until they get me as they got poor Heath."

Morrison, minus his disguise of smoked spectacles but still retaining his small black moustache like a couple of smutty finger-prints beneath his good-looking nose, leaned over the back of his chair and looked at Superintendent Fuller of the Truro Police Division, with determination in his eyes. They were sitting in the Superintendent's office the same afternoon.

"You tell me this ghost train affair is all moonshine—that the legend was in existence long before your time. All right. The fact remains that the first moment any attempt at investigation has been made, they manage to put the investigator out of the way. They must have known Heath wasn't a tramp. How? Why? And what connection had Davies' death with the affair? Where's it linked up? I tell you, Fuller, it looks to me very suspicious."

The Superintendent looked down at him in silence, but there was an indulgent little twinkle in his eye. He was a good fellow, but apt to be sceptical of fancies. The Division had no use for ghost stories; the Cornish were always full of 'em. He couldn't see any linking up between a legendary train and the deaths of two policemen, queer though those events were.

"Besides, Heath was a pal of mine."

The Superintendent ceased twinkling.

"I'm sorry about Mr. Heath, Captain Morrison. But though the manner of Davies' death hasn't been established, of course, everything points to the fact that he came along that cliff road at a crucial moment when a large piece of rock loosened itself from the hillside. He was bicycling home from seeing a friend. On his way back, taking a near cut, the poor chap seems to have been unlucky

enough to be in the way of the big stone we found by his side. His helmet was bashed in, and lay close by."

Morrison brooded. He had not mentioned the flashing glimpse he had caught of that girl on the cliff road — the very road where P. C. Davies had come to his end. What was the connecting link between the three events — if any? Could it be that she was in some way concerned with the death of Heath? The idea appalled and shocked him strangely. He tried to deny it house room in his thoughts, but it persisted with disagreeable intensity.

"What verdict was returned on Davies, Superintendent?" he asked presently.

"Death from misadventure."

Morrison leaned over and knocked the ashes from his pipe on the bars of the grate in which a cheerful fire blazed.

"When is the inquest on Heath?"

"To-morrow morning."

"I'd like to see him, Fuller."

Fuller rose. "The mortuary is at the end of that long corridor, just across the yard," he said, opening the door to point the way, and Morrison went out.

Looking down on the quiet face from which the

fun and nonsense had forever gone, Morrison felt his heart contract. That thought about the girl, the girl that had so queerly and unexpectedly taken hold of his emotions, came again. Why, almost the last words he had spoken to Heath in the hotel at Cologne had been about her! He had said that he didn't want to believe her guilty of intriguing with the crooks he was after, and Heath had ejaculated in a silly little childish exclamation he often used, "Little apples!" and given one of his happy little chuckling laughs at the idea of old Morrison being bowled over by a girl at last. He could hear the very sound again, see the surprised look in Heath's merry eyes. For that was what Morrison's remark had been tantamount to — a confession of love for that girl, the girl who was probably no better than a thief herself, and who was quite possibly instrumental in bringing about the untimely death of his best friend.

He closed the door of the cold little chamber where Heath lay in his last sleep and went back to the Superintendent's office feeling sick at heart.

"Superintendent," he said, "I suppose the coroner will direct the jury to bring in a verdict of death from natural causes — or from causes unknown? There were no marks of violence on the body?"

"None, except a slight bruise on the right temple which might have been caused by falling on the corner of one of the forms in the station waiting-room. It's quite on the cards that's how he came by his death," he added suggestively. "Or perhaps heart failure."

Morrison looked relieved.

"Good. The less fuss about this matter the better. You'll want me to identify the body, I suppose. Now, one more question. Do you know anything of a concern calling itself the Silverway Clay Works upon the hill above Fal Vale station?"

"Not much," replied the Superintendent. "A small company started about a couple of years ago, but I fancy they found most of the china clay had been dug out years since. The place is riddled with quarries, like a rabbit warren, up there — tin and clay, most of 'em disused now. These people thought they'd struck a seam, but they don't seem to do much, though I believe they employ a few men. Run by two brothers called Silverton and one Price."

"Live thereabouts?"

The Superintendent shook his head. "As far as I know, there's no houses at Fal Vale except a few cottages down by the sea. But don't take my word

for it, I haven't examined the district myself, though Inspector ——"

"No, don't bother him now. I'll do a little examining of my own and let you know if I want any help. I'm really on this job in an unofficial capacity, you know, Fuller, because Heath was my friend. Many thanks all the same."

But, out in High Street, Morrison turned into the main post office and sent a coded wire to the Chief at Scotland Yard asking for the assistance of Jackson as soon as he could be spared.

# CHAPTER VI

In the cobbled courtyard of the " Black Sheep " the boots was cleaning his bicycle, whistling lightly the while. Watching him from his first-floor bedroom window, before which he was brushing his hair the next morning, the detective suddenly ceased the vigorous scrubbing of his scalp with alternate left and right-hand movements, and put the brushes back on the dressing-table, arrested by a thought. One of the minor problems that had crossed his mind in thinking over the job ahead was that of transport. The mysterious something about the neighbourhood of Fal Vale, and particularly of the little station that had acquired such ill report, necessitated caution, especially when he remembered the curiously intent stare of those greenish-grey eyes of Saul Hodgkin, the station-master and general factotum.

Perhaps, though, the man's curiosity had been natural enough in the circumstances. One " foreigner " had met an untimely end within the very waiting-room of which he was in charge — other strangers might easily be regarded with suspicion — why, probably Hodgkin even suspected him, Morrison, of having some connection with the death

of the tramp! Trains, therefore, even if they had not been so few and far between, were taboo; and equally, a strange car would cause unwelcome interest in the minds of the few inhabitants.

Finishing his dressing and donning his smoked glasses, Morrison descended the stairs and went through the broad corridor out to the back of the building, standing idly at the door and watching the lad at his work.

"That's a nice machine," he remarked presently. Boots looked up.

"Her warn't so bad when her were new, sir, a matter of two year or so."

"Care to hire her out for a few days?" Morrison asked casually.

The boy considered a moment, stopped his rubbing and glanced up with the shrewd eye to a bargain of the true Cornishman.

"That all depends, sir. I use her a goodish bit, off and on."

"Ten shillings a day is about the figure I had in mind," Morrison suggested. "I might want her for a week, perhaps less. My bag of samples is a bit heavy, and a car would cost too much. There doesn't seem much business doing in the villages round about."

The Cornish lad looked at the commercial trav-

eller as though he thought he was slightly mad. Perhaps the bicycle was worth three pounds, perhaps less; and anybody might hire a cycle from a shop for half-a-crown a day.

"Right, sir," he agreed hastily, half fearing the splendid offer might be retracted before it was accepted. "I'll give her a bit of an extra polish-up and leave her here in the yard for 'ee, sir."

"Good!" Morrison selected a couple of pound notes from his pocket, handed them to the boy and strolled back to the coffee-room.

After breakfast, the traveller strapped his leather sample case on the back of the bicycle with elaborate care and set off, arriving at the police station by way of the narrow back streets of the town. The inquest on the body of the "tramp" was timed to take place at ten o'clock that morning, and he found already in the little courthouse a sprinkling of those members of the public who made a point of never missing any sensation that might be flung at them by those kind gods who cater for the streak of morbidity in human nature. These were, however, few to-day — a mere tramp having little interest for all but the most case-hardened. The details were simple enough and presently he wheeled his bicycle out again and went on his way, soberly.

A verdict of "Death from cause unknown" had been returned, but the coroner had added a rider to the effect that it had probably been due to "fall during a fainting attack, and the striking of his head against a seat or form in the railway waiting-room at Fal Vale."

Morrison was thankful for that verdict. It was undesirable to arouse any further suspicion at the moment as to the queer happenings of the little place; and if the story of the ghostly train crossed the minds of readers of the next day's local papers in connection with the three-lined paragraph recording the unimportant event — well, probably such a suspicion would only cause the superstitious Cornish folk to give the place a wider berth than ever.

He pedalled the ten miles industriously away, but not too industriously to prevent his mind busily going over the various items in the job, on which he had to base his calculations.

Item one — and the biggest and most important clue of all — was, of course, the presence of the girl with the grey eyes he had seen in Cologne, the girl who had so cleverly eluded him there, and who, impossible as it seemed, was here in this remote spot of the west country, and identified in some puzzling manner, not only with the getting out of the way of the policeman and of poor young Heath,

but with that gang of jewel thieves he had so bunglingly let slip through his fingers. He could not surely be mistaken in the identity of that girl? Even through the misty atmosphere of a Cornish sea-fog on a late winter's afternoon, he would have staked his life on those eyes being the identical pair that had so intrigued his imagination in the Cologne studio. No, there could not be two girls with those same wistful, half-frightened grey eyes, the colour of a dove's breast. There was something dreamy, misty, ethereal, almost psychic about them, in spite of their expression of fear, that would have marked them out for him from all other eyes, even if something deeper and stronger, some strange stirring in his heart had not told him that there could be but one woman like that in all the world.

The question was, what on earth had she really to do with the gang? and what possible connection could there be between the Oppenhaupt diamonds and this Cornish legend of a phantom train that ran through an obscure country station, and that no one saw and lived afterwards to tell the tale?

If indeed, there was any connection, was it not at least possible that her presence (if there were *not* such another girl in the world and after all it was a case of mistaken identity) in the neighbourhood was a matter of pure coincidence?

"There's no such thing as coincidence, my boy," he could almost hear the Chief's wise voice talking in his ear, "only cause and effect. That's the first rule you young fellers have got to get into your heads; and don't you ever forget it." That being so, he must assume her guilty of complicity at least, in the game, whatever it was. Yes; and her anxiety to avoid him, her first escape and her second incredible disappearance in the mist on the cliff road, all tended to confirm these suspicions.

It was possible that she was the key to items two and three: the untimely end of Police Constable Davies and young Heath within a few days of each other. That was the stark fact he hated but must face. The other pieces of the puzzle — the newly-worked quarry in the hillside overlooking the sea; Superintendent Fuller's careless remark that there seemed to be very little business being done up there (a remark which had, nevertheless, sown the seeds of an idea in Morrison's mind), the ghost train itself, seemed to have little enough connection with the theft of the jewels on the face of it.

One fact seemed to emerge from his cogitations as he passed the station of Fal Vale lying twenty yards back from the white road he was following, and that was the grim one that he must somehow get hold of that girl, and that, whatever his private

feeling on the matter might be, and however much his inclinations might run counter to his duty, he must immediately place her under arrest as a suspect. There was always the excuse of her possible connection with the remainder of the haul of diamonds, some of which had been captured in Cologne.

Besides, D'Alvarez and Herr Otto Schnitz were still at large; and he had to fathom her place in *their* particular scheme of things.

A solitary fisherman examining the caulking of a small upturned boat on the pebbles below the sea-wall attracted his attention. He dismounted, leaving the bicycle propped against the rough stone wall, dropped over it and crossed the shingle to the fisherman's side.

The fisherman stared up at the sound of footsteps crushing on the stones, obviously surprised at the advent of a stranger. Indeed, Morrison might have been an apparition, judging by the startled look in the man's eyes as he halted at his side and addressed him in a friendly fashion.

"Good day. What are the weather indications, I wonder?" He glanced up at the palely clouded sky as he spoke.

"Eh?" The fisherman placed a hand behind his ear indicating deafness.

"Will it rain, do you think?" shouted Morrison.

"Rain? Eh, that I can't tell 'ee, sir. What wi' they wireless machines and meteorological chaps, the weather's been that mucked up nobody can't make no proper foretellin's in these days."

He shook his head dubiously and went on examining the seams of the upturned boat, running a horny forefinger along the joints.

"Have a cigarette," said Morrison, proffering his case. "Lonely spot, this."

"Ay, we don't see many strangers here. What might you be doing, sir, in these parts?"

"Oh, I'm travelling for a firm, though I'm bound to say I don't see much prospect of doing business here. Any shops? Any boats come in?" He pointed to the stone jetty a hundred yards ahead. The fisherman regarded him suspiciously.

"Bain't been no boats call here in my knowledge for a matter o' eight years or more," he announced. "Not since the clay-boats did go sailing up the river there from the quarries." He pointed to the river mouth that emptied its waters into the sea a quarter of a mile farther down the coast; and shaking his head dubiously went on with his inspection.

"You don't use your little pier, then?"

"No, sir." The fisherman turned his back with such determination to end the questioning of the inquisitive stranger that Morrison shrugged, and with a little smile abandoned further attempts at polite conversation. These Cornish people were undoubtedly highly suspicious by nature; they gave very little away.

He strolled along the grey sea aimlessly for a few moments, then, whistling to himself, ascended the beach and swung himself over the wall again into the white road, walking his bicycle until he came to the jetty, along which he went. When he came to the end of it that jutted out into the sea, he stopped in surprise.

On the rough cobbled surface there were footmarks in white clay — not the single footmarks of a solitary pedestrian such as one might have expected to see in such a place, but clay trodden and ground into the interstices of the stones as with the trampling of boots, marked freshly with the imprint of feet, as though men from the quarries above had recently loaded a boat from that jetty.

And yet the fisherman had denied the existence of shipping there — just as the station-master had denied the existence of houses! Were the whole of the inhabitants in league? And what sinister secret was it they wished to keep?

# CHAPTER VII

RUMINATING on this fresh discovery, Morrison turned his bicycle and walked slowly back the length of the jetty, his apparently careless glance to right and left searching for further clues. The water lapped with innocent heartiness on either side of him against the heavy granite stones forming the small landing-stage, and stretched away and away till the horizon itself melted in the uniformly lowering hue of the skies.

Superintendent Fuller had given him to understand that there was no working being done in the Silverton quarries, and the general impression he had got from enquiries had been that the Fal Vale pits had ceased to yield. But here had been a boat that had obviously been loaded from the region of those pits. Where did they send that clay, and why the secrecy about its destination?

He turned onto the road and began the ascent of the cliff walk, thinking vigorously. The next step, he decided, was the inspection of those deserted workings — and specially of the Silverton quarry. He wondered if Jackson would be able to get down soon; wondered if the Chief had had anything at the

back of his mind in sending him (or in falling in so readily with his own suggestion to come, which was tantamount to the same thing), to this out-of-the-way spot. The Chief was an adept at subconscious suggestion with his staff; he played his game like a chess-problem, and only one of his own brain calibre could foretell — from that trivial move of the pawn — just at what point checkmate would be made.

The sharply ascending road along the cliff presently took him, still wheeling the bicycle, to a spot where he judged his examination ought to begin. On the sea side the ground dropped steeply, in some places almost perpendicularly, to the rocky shore below; on the other it mounted against the sky, its face scarred and mutilated here and there with the wounds of the old quarries which had been, however, partly hidden by the encroaching growth of kindly weeds and scrubby bushes.

There was not a soul in sight, a rapid glance right and left, up and down the road assured him. Leaving his machine against the cliff side, he wheeled suddenly through the opening in the wall across which the board bearing the name of the Silverway Clay Works stretched, and after a few moments found himself in one of those large semi-circular openings so familiar in quarrying countries. There seemed to be nothing to differentiate it from

half a dozen other such quarries; and inspection proved that beyond the fact that one or two rusty, V-shaped iron carriers stood on the little branch railway-line, which had obviously served these quarries in days past, it was as deserted as the others appeared to be.

An uncanny quietness enveloped the place; it was like a thing dead, and only the wild screaming of gulls quarrelling over a decaying fish on the shore below and the distant sound of the water breaking on the rocky coast disturbed the silence. There was no human creature to hinder the most complete examination of the place, and Morrison made it leisurely. Obviously there had been workmen about recently, for he found the ground trodden hard in places here and there, where apparently there had been a desultory sort of quarrying going on, which bore traces, however, more of experimental than of actual working.

He left the place an hour later, more puzzled than ever. Nothing in the Silverway quarries had yielded him any of the evidence he was seeking; he had merely satisfied himself as to the correctness of Superintendent Fuller's remarks. He was about to retrace his steps towards the road when something prompted him to turn and continue his way along a ledge that wound round from one side of the quarry,

seemingly formed by the discarded stones and rubbish dug out from it; and he presently found himself standing on the edge. But instead of the sheer hill rising before him as he had expected, he was looking down into a sort of concealed crater round the bend of the quarry. It was then that he made the discovery.

Below him, nestling among a thick growth of tall trees, now bare except for a few dismal remnants of leaves hanging dryly upon the stiff branches, and completely hidden in the hollow behind the quarry, was a house.

It appeared to be uninhabited. No smoke ascended from the chimneys — the ground surrounding it was a tangled mass of neglected vegetation, brown and withered, bearing no trace of man's subordination; and he could see no means of approach. Creeping carefully along the ridge, however, he presently made out that a steeply descending road from the inland side of the hills wound its way down among more trees. In summer the house must, he concluded, be completely hidden from view, at any rate on this side, by the dense growth.

This mysterious house, than which nothing more desolate could have been imagined, instantly connected itself in Morrison's mind with the disappearance of the girl. Yet that girl, he as instantly remem-

bered, had vanished from his sight considerably higher up the hill *and on the other side* of the cliff road.

A little thing like that was not likely to quench the excitement the discovery of the hidden house had caused in the detective's breast, however. There was probably a connecting link somewhere and it was his business to find the missing piece of the chain. The ridge ended abruptly in a tangled copse on the hillside; there was no possibility of descent in that direction. He crept back, keeping himself carefully out of sight below the top of the ridge for fear of prying eyes; not that there was much likelihood of his being seen, unless there had been a look-out in the roof. From his coign of vantage all he himself could see of the house were the roof and the chimneys and a gable or two in grey stone; an old house, it looked, and uninhabited, probably the haunt of nothing more interesting than bats and spiders. But, if so, where had that girl gone to?

Walking carelessly through the great vault of the quarry again, Morrison came out on the road and continued his way up to the top of the cliff. The road wound along, he found, for several miles at the cliff edge, with the sea gleaming faintly in the November light, far, far below. Then it took an abrupt turn inland and seemed to zigzag endlessly

on ahead. Before he had gone very much farther, he wished he had brought the bicycle.

The result of his investigations, after hours of tramping that zigzag road which so annoyingly wound back on itself and back again in the irresponsible manner of old British tracks, was that he located what he inferred to be the mouth of the lane leading back and down, he judged, a couple of miles at right angles from the main road, into the heart of the hill towards the deserted house; but so choked and overgrown with hanging branches and withered weeds that there appeared to be scarcely room for a small car to penetrate its fastnesses.

One thing seemed certain; for whatever purpose the old house had originally been used — probably it had been a pleasure resort before clay or tin mines had been located on that hill — its present occupiers, if any, seemed scarcely in the habit of welcoming strangers.

Teddie paused for several minutes outside the repellent-looking entrance to the lane, turning over in his mind the effect his stumbling upon the house might be likely to have on his quest. His impulse was to make a further and immediate search of the lane itself. Who knew what those forbidding depths might have to unfold for him? With such queer places in the neighbourhood, his thoughts went on, it

was no wonder legends of ghosts and what not were rife about the district.

Further consideration decided him to defer exploration till a future date and stick to his original plan of trying to find out how the girl with the grey eyes had made her getaway on the cliff road. After all, the lane wouldn't vanish in a night, and he had some considerable distance to travel before he reached the neighbourhood of the Silverway quarry again. And it would be dusk in an hour.

He paused a second longer to take in with quick glances such signs and symbols as would enable him to identify the place again, then turned and made his way back down the zigzag road.

The afternoon's work elated him considerably. He felt that some of the threads in that elusive skein of intrigue and crime he was trying to unravel were at length in his hands. Here at least was something concrete on which to base supposition or imagination; whether the mysteriously placed house and the overgrown lane had anything to do with the matter in hand or not was for him to find out.

He felt eager for Jackson's arrival! If Jackson were here he could be keeping a watch on the place while Morrison explored the other side of the road, the side where that girl had so suddenly evaporated, as it were, into the mist of the Cornish sea.

But half an hour's zealous search between a point above the quarry and a generous distance beyond, somewhat daunted the detective's enthusiasm. The cliff seemed to drop almost sheerly under a clothing of rough gorse and vegetation, and he could see no track of any description by which a human being could have descended to the shore. His inclination was to abandon the probing of the place until to-morrow, and to rest for the moment on the spurs of the day.

"You're bewitched, my boy, or on the wrong track altogether," he told himself exasperatedly. Then some advice of the Chief's recalled itself to his mind. "Suspect everything and never give up a clue till you've followed it to the bitter end," and another of his axioms — "When in doubt, sit down and smoke on it."

The last advice seemed to him pretty sound under the circumstances; he decided to eat a sandwich, have a pipe and then continue his search, so he squatted on the cliff edge and pulled out his sandwich case.

Ten minutes later, pipe drawing well, soothed by the rest and the tobacco and the contemplation of the grey sky and sea blending together in one harmonious calm, the far-away shriek of an engine whistle caught his ear, and presently he saw a train

winding out of the station and disappearing inland. It was the afternoon train from Truro, he ascertained by a glance at his watch. A further ten minutes passed and then a figure was discernible climbing the hill towards him; and after another short period of time he made out the figure to be that of Jackson. Morrison jumped up and went forward to meet him.

"The very person I was wanting, and wanting badly, Jackson," he cried in a pleased voice. "I suppose Fuller told you I was likely to be here? Any news — any message from the Chief? Barlow done anything?"

"Nothing that I've heard of. He crossed over to try and pick up the trail of the Schnitz crowd in Germany, but there's nothing to report as yet. Didn't expect there would be," Jackson volunteered laconically. He was very loyal to Captain Morrison.

Teddie heaved a sigh of relief.

"Well, there isn't much news here either. This is as far as I've got up to now." And he briefly related the circumstances.

Jackson pulled at his long moustache meditatively as he listened.

"You seem to have got hold of a particularly elusive young lady, sir."

"The whole point is that I *haven't* got hold of

her, Jackson. Feel like a ten-mile walk? Right-oh! Now, I suggest that you follow that road round to where it meets the main Truro road, which it must do a mile or so beyond the lane, and make a note of the position, while I do a little more search-work here as long as the daylight lasts. I've got the bicycle, so I'll ride back. We can't do much more to-day. Any bright ideas you may get on the way we'll talk over when we meet at the hotel this evening. I'm jolly glad you've come, old lad." Teddie slapped the other's shoulder affectionately. Jackson beamed.

In truth, the advent of anyone so solid and reliable as Jackson in this mist-enshrouded atmosphere had given him a fresh stimulus to work, and as soon as the burly form of his assistant had vanished round the bend in the road he redoubled his efforts, going back again and again to the spot from which he had seen the girl vanish, re-acting the little episode of his pursuit of her and finally determining by carefully comparing the time it took to walk the distance, that a gorse-covered patch of ground among loose stones on the hillside must have been the scene of her evaporation. Certainly she could not have scaled the cliff wall opposite, which was, just here, well-nigh perpendicular; and equally she must have possessed the feet of a mountain deer if she had made her way down to the sea!

He swung his legs over the cliff edge. They landed on a ledge which gave fairly secure footing, though the stones rolled under his feet and went scattering down the cliff face in an unpleasantly suggestive fashion. Steadying himself with a grip of the hands on the ragged branches of gorse at the top, he felt his way along. And then, all at once, the ground gave way beneath his feet, and he was jerked violently downwards through a black and narrow space.

# CHAPTER VIII

SURPRISINGLY, the violent descent did not dislocate every bone in his body, though it was several minutes before the detective recovered from the shock of his fall. When he did so, and his stunned brain had more or less returned to normality, he found the reason. He was sitting huddled on a small wooden platform, just big enough to take one person, on which he had descended to the bottom of a rough shaft cut in the cliff-side. Obviously he had stumbled on the entrance to what appeared to be an underground tunnel. Peering about him, in the semi-darkness, he saw the chimney-like shaft rising above him with a glint of pale sky topping it; he had shot down it on the primitive lift into what to all appearances was an old smuggling cave.

But when he tried to crawl out of the small aperture the lift-shaft ended in, a sharp pain shot up his left leg, and he found himself unable to stand on it. He desisted effort in that direction for a moment while he took stock of the situation. Here he was, caught with a hurt limb in the middle of an underground tunnel, at one end of which he could discern the rocky beach and hear the faint

rushing sound of the sea — fortunately at low tide. The other, as far as the blocked and dim light permitted him to detect it, seemed to be a mass of undergrowth. Remembering his smoked glasses, he felt about on the floor and, luckily, recovered them unbroken. Then, dizzily, he dragged himself to a standing position, and tried the hurt foot again, finding it useless for the moment, at any rate, and extremely painful. The situation, however, was too critical a one to admit of any delay in action. The sea was out, certainly, but he did not know the tides, it might be coming in, and certain small pools which glinted between the interstices of the pebbly floor showed him that the water in full tide rose high enough to enter some distance into the cave. There was nothing for it but to make an exit through the other end and trust to luck.

He felt his way cautiously along with the help of the tunnel wall, drawing the injured foot after him. It was an unpleasant process, and the anticipation of what he might find at the end of the cave was not exactly cheering. He might have fallen into a deliberate trap! The leg might be broken for all he knew; certainly it felt as though it would, at least temporarily, put an end to his activities, and he heartily cursed his ill-luck at the mishap. Just on the very eve of this interesting discovery, too!

Reaching the cave mouth he found it curtained with trailing streamers of creeping plants, which effectually covered it and yet were quite easily parted. He drew himself through and looked about him.

Not ten yards away rose the walls of the house he had seen from the cliff top; an old, roughly built house of stone which indeed appeared to have been partly quarried out of the hillside itself, so closely it nestled under the side of the pit. A neglected path bordered by evergreen shrubs led up to it; the whole place, wedged down in the hollow of the hill, looked deserted, forgotten, half-unreal in the falling darkness, with the pale walls of the quarry towering ghostly above and behind it, shutting out what fading light there remained. A place to shrink from even in broad daylight.

There could be no shrinking now, however; whatever his physical disability — and he was a bit dubious about the extent of his injury — Teddie Morrison knew that he must go forwards at all costs.

He approached the house carefully through the shrub-bordered path, dragging himself along by the help of the branches, every nerve alert. Halfway along he suddenly stopped, startled into stillness.

It was a low whimpering that reached his ears, a sound uncanny in the extreme, coming as it did at

that moment. Amid the weird stillness of the place it echoed hollow-like and dismal, a noise like that of a child or an animal being tortured.

He stood stock-still for a second, then, completely unaware at that moment of the pain in his foot, limped towards the house.

He found himself against a blank wall in which was neither door nor window except a small one covered by a grating near the ground, which appeared to give light to a semi-underground chamber or cellar. Stooping down and peering into the dim recesses, he made out a room lighted by a small lamp standing on a table in the middle of the room, the flame being partly obscured by the figure of a man whose back interposed between it and the watcher at the window.

Something sinister about that window, he thought; something sinister about the way the sodden ivy crowded jealously around it, as if in an endeavour to keep out what little light of day could ever penetrate to the place. Sinister, the figure bending motionless over the table; and still more so the wailing that smote on his ears again, a shuddering horror of sound that for a second froze him through and through, rendering him incapable of thought or action.

The next, he had gathered his wits about him.

By luck, or the good guidance of his particular guardian angel, he had stumbled on some mystery that needed urgent explanation, far divorced though it might be from his actual quest. Something terrible and cruel must be going on in that underground chamber. But what? He dragged himself along the blank wall, turned the corner, reached the front of the building and, flinging himself against a closed door to which was neither knocker nor bell, beat upon its wooden panels with his fists.

Silence. Only the echoing of the blows down what might be empty corridors.

Morrison drew back, angry and baffled, and stared about him. A wide circular sweep of weedy gravel fronted the house, but ahead of that, what had once been a garden had now degenerated into a mere wilderness, penetrated by a narrow roadway that must be the one to lead up on to the cliff road. The quarry sides rose vast and sheer above him. The strange house was actually built into the bottom of a pit; the sky was scarcely discernible except here and there between the bare branches of the trees that, like the ivy-clung window, everywhere strangled the light of day.

Annoyed and impatient at the pain that was tugging at his leg again, Morrison stopped craning his neck and was turning back to make a further

assault on the door, when it was opened suddenly, and an old man stood on the threshold.

His thin white hair and beard blew about a frail white face in the draught of the doorway. Beneath the domed forehead a pair of wide-open eyes, incredibly bright and innocent, stared out; and within their depths Morrison perceived the unmistakable light of fanaticism. The figure was thin and frail in the extreme, and the hands, long, white, knotted old hands, twisted themselves together nervously. The old man was shabbily dressed, he seemed to be shivering with cold; but when he spoke his voice was gentle and cultured.

"You knocked?" he remarked politely.

Morrison smiled. He would hardly have called his thunderous assault by so mild a name.

"Yes, I knocked. The fact is I chanced upon an old lift-shaft — as I suppose it to be — in the cliff edge and had a nasty fall, wrenching my foot. I wondered if you would allow me to come in and rest it a little?"

The old man shot one startled glance towards the overgrown lane ahead as if he expected someone to appear from that direction, and another behind him into the darkness of the house's interior.

"We do not have visitors here," he said in a hurried whisper. "We do not welcome them. They

interfere with our researches." Again he glanced over his shoulder.

"I promise you I won't do that." Morrison saw that the old man must be humoured like a child if he was to achieve his object, and at all costs he must obtain a footing in the house. "I thought if I might rest this confounded leg for an hour, I should be able to find my way back. As it is — *ugh!*"

He suddenly sat down on the threshold, partly in real and partly in pretended inability to continue longer in a standing position. "I'm afraid," he apologised, "it's broken ——"

"Broken! Oh dear, I hope not." The old man hovered over him in alarm, thrusting his fingers through and through his thin wisp of beard. "Perhaps you had better come in and sit down — though we never have visitors," he repeated agitatedly. "We live completely out of the world, busy with our researches, researches which will, nevertheless, revolutionize the whole of civilization. But — let me help you to rise."

He had no more strength than a kitten, but Morrison allowed the strange old man to think he was aiding him to his feet; and a moment later, the old fellow's arm through his, he found himself within the walls of the mysterious house, and being escorted through a dark passageway to a room

which he perceived at once was on the opposite side of the house to the cellar-like apartment into which he had gazed.

To his surprise, the room he now entered was almost a cheerful one. There was no fire on the hearth, but an oil stove with a red glass face sent out a grateful warmth and lightened the gloom of the place to a surprising extent. There were chintz covers on the chairs, and curtains to the window beneath which a round table with a polished surface held a bowl of late chrysanthemums. In its simple way the room exhibited a certain amount of tasteful, quiet furnishing.

" Be seated," the old man was saying, " and rest your foot. I hope the damage is not so extensive as you fear. You are the first within many years to have come across that old mining lift-shaft," he went on garrulously. " It was, I believe, worked by a pulley that regulated its speed, and I can quite understand that you made a violent descent if you failed to use it properly. Tradition has it that in the days when the coast was a network of smugglers' caves, some enterprising member of a gang evolved it as a ready means of eluding unwelcome intruders. It is never used nowadays, of course, and probably the pulleys are rusted or rotten. It should be securely covered."

He began to move restlessly about the room, twisting his thin hands together. Once or twice he approached the door, then wandered back again, with an anxious eye on Morrison.

"You want to get back to your work, sir," the latter encouraged. "Don't let me detain you. If I may sit here a little ——"

"I hardly like to leave you," the old man returned eagerly, "but ——" he eyed the other dubiously and Morrison felt he was mouthing the phrase again, "*We don't encourage visitors here.*" "Scientific research is a hard taskmaster," he went on aloud. "A very hard taskmaster. It brooks no neglect. You have heard of my work, doubtless —the work of Professor John Price, the Egyptologist?"

Morrison hadn't, but "The world rings with your fame, sir, and I am proud to meet you" he lied, with an assumed sincerity that made the old fellow's eyes gleam with a mad brilliance.

"Ah! I am coming into my own then, at last! I had not heard! I live so far out of the track of men. Before very long there will be fresh evidence of my powers given to the world!" He added in a whisper, reflectively, as if to himself: "If wheat, why not drugs?"

Convinced in his own mind that the old fellow

was obsessed with some idea to the very point of insanity, Morrison could only reiterate in bewilderment: "Wheat? Drugs?"

The old man went to the window and pulled aside the curtain.

"Look! — No, you needn't move from your chair, you can see without getting up, the light is still good enough. Look at that little square patch of stubble in the middle of the garden. I planted them as far away from the trees as possible, in a little clearing I made — there, do you see?"

Morrison looked in the direction indicated.

"That," resumed the old man triumphantly, "was, this summer, a small field of wheat planted from grain found in the tomb of one of the kings of Egypt, a monarch who was dead and buried two thousand years before the birth of Christ. Now do you see my point?"

Completely at a loss, the detective, nevertheless, nodded his head in agreement. He could not imagine what his strange host was getting at, yet it was only by encouraging him to talk that he might stumble on some glimmer of truth in the queer web that seemed to be weaving itself ever closer about him. Whether it had any bearing on the matter in hand seemed more than doubtful. But the old man was speaking:

"Imagine it! The wonder of those seeds still holding within themselves the germ of life, after — two — thousand — years!"

He dropped the curtain, turned back to the room, and approached the other's side, stealthily, bending over him as if to impart some precious secret.

"In the same sarcophagus," he whispered in Morrison's ear, "I discovered a sealed phial that, on analysis, proved to contain a virulent poison in the form of powder. I said to myself, 'If those grains could spring into life after all that time, why might not the drug still hold its vital properties?' "

Remembering the dreadful sound of a being in agony that he had heard outside the barred window, Morrison felt a cold shiver creep down his spine.

"' Might it not be that we are on the verge of a discovery that may revolutionize the whole theory of death by violence?' I said to myself. And it is to that end I have worked and worked, night and day, seeking, analysing, experimenting ——"

For the life of him Morrison could not help an involuntary shrinking away from the gloating eyes of the scientist, that were fastened on his with such an intensity of fanaticism. Quick to perceive the movement, the old man bent closer, whispering eagerly:

"Ah, you fail to understand me. All I do is for

the benefit of mankind. My researches have led me to an invention that will supersede poison gas. I have discovered a secret that would rid the world of England's enemies within twenty-four hours (or render them impotent for a time, depending on the strength of the drug); all based on the formula of a milligram of powder found in the coffin of a long dead king. I claim," his voice rose to a cracked vibrance, " to have made the most important scientific discovery of any age since the Pharaohs! My experiments are almost complete—even now——"

Suddenly he ceased — the fiery gleam faded from his eyes, they became cloudy and troubled, and, for a second, he looked at Morrison as though he had that moment become aware of his presence. Gazing fearfully about him, and fumbling his old hands together in a manner somehow pitiful, the old man cried in a trembling, worried voice:

" But I forgot — we do not encourage visitors — I have been talking too much. Now I must go."

He hurried away, opened the door, closed it gently behind him, and the detective, listening intently, heard the sound of his steps feebly and slowly descending what seemed to be stone stairs, and then dying away into silence.

Amazement, mingled with disappointment, were the chief feelings in the young detective's breast as

he took stock of his surroundings. He had apparently come by a series of chances upon a harmless madman whose brain had been turned by delvings into the remote past, and who lived hermit-wise in this isolated and (to any healthy-minded being) rather terrifying spot in order to indulge his passion for research; who hid himself away from the disturbing influences of life in nineteen hundred and twenty-six to devote himself to the mankind of two thousand years B.C.

Was he, after all, on a completely false scent — or was all this merely a distinctly odourous herring drawn across the trail?

He weighed the pros and cons. Supposing he were all wrong and had to smell around to pick up an entirely fresh set of clues, where the dickens was he to begin? And how was he to get out of this hole — for he *was* in a hole, literally as well as figuratively — with his foot hurting abominably and beginning to feel three times too large for his boot, and night coming on, miles away from anywhere and with no hope of assistance?

On the other hand, supposing (the thought flashed at him) the old man's interest in poisons *had* anything to do with the deaths of Heath and P. C. Davies? That might well be — but were they merely the objects of his experimentalising or was

there anything more behind it? And what bearing had the story of the phantom train on the whole affair?

Above all, what light could the presence in the vicinity of the girl with the dove-grey eyes shed on the mystery? And where had she disappeared to, if not down that dismal lift-shaft? It could be properly manipulated, the old fellow had said —— But she wasn't here and the scientist hadn't mentioned her.

His seeking eyes came to rest on the corner of a small table nearby (the room was now lighted solely by the red glow from the stove, for the daylight had almost completely faded) and on the table he caught sight of a small white object. Limping across the room he took it in his hand.

It was a reel of white cotton, the needle still holding its thread stuck into the label-covered hole in the top; and by its side reposed a little silver thimble.

# CHAPTER IX

THE detective stood with the little thimble in his hand, thinking deeply and twisting it about in the steady red light from the oil-stove.

Whoever it belonged to was an industrious little person, for it showed signs of wear and was even pierced with a tiny hole or two here and there in its ornamental surface. A reel of cotton with a needle stuck in it might have formed part of a bachelor's equipment, though hardly, perhaps, such fine cotton — number fifty, he noted — and such a small needle. When the male sex was obliged by force of circumstance to sew on its buttons, it usually did so with coarse linen thread and a darning needle. But allowing the cotton, that thimble could never have been used by male hands. Why, it wasn't big enough to cover the tip of his little finger! He tried it. It perched ridiculously on the very top.

It was the first piece of direct evidence, Morrison considered slowly, he had run up against. There suddenly came across his mind a sentence the girl with the grey eyes had spoken in the Cologne studio — "Father thinks I'm working at a dressmaker's."

He was seized with a strange excitement. The

natural optimism of his character invariably came uppermost the moment it was given half a chance; and now the chance was a whole one. His professional instinct could not be at fault (and instinct plays a considerable part in the unravelling of mysteries); he felt convinced that he held in his hands something belonging to the girl with the eyes of misty grey.

If so, it meant he had "traced" a suspicious character to her lair. From that, more, much more, would follow. He was sanguine enough to believe that either his own perspicacity or the luck that sometimes aids good detectives as well as babes and drunkards, would result in "something big." Perhaps he might even put Barlow, in whom the Chief had so much faith, in the shade, and reinstate himself in his own and the Chief's eyes. After that, who was there to stop his rapid ascent of the ladder? Certainly not Barlow!

But even as the rosy dream unfolded itself before his eyes, Teddie Morrison the man asserted himself over Captain Edward Gascoigne Morrison, M. C.; D. S. O., late of His Majesty's Fusiliers and now of the Secret Service. Whatever he did to help himself up that ladder would be at the expense and to the detriment of the girl with the grey eyes. And most emphatically he didn't want to hurt that girl!

The little thimble in his hand was making him feel deuced sentimental. Somehow it seemed a part of her. She had used it; with its help sewn all sorts of things for her own slender body to wear; perhaps through those tiny holes in its sides, she had pricked her finger and it had bled. Perhaps there was even a little speck of her very blood on it now! There must be something distinctly uncanny, something psychic about the thing, looking silly perched on the top of his little finger; for at that moment, Teddie Morrison the man felt he would cheerfully have seen every rung of the ladder of fame smashed to splinters, or Barlow grinning at him from the top of it, if he could have clasped the little hand that thimble fitted just once within his own. Then he pulled himself erect again. Ass! Filling his mind with sentimental tosh when so much was at stake!

"Well anyhow," he excused himself, "I'm not here in my professional capacity at all! I'm on a holiday — well, perhaps not quite — I *did* get the Chief to let me have Jackson ——"

No, there was no loop-hole that way. Grimly he realised he must go through with the thing. It would never do to let the Chief and Jackson down for the sake of his own foolish feelings for a girl with grey eyes most suspiciously mixed up with a gang of international thieves.

"It doesn't do to have feelings where women are concerned," the Chief had remarked a little drily at their last interview. Even then, he had wanted to make excuses for her! He began to feel panicky and uncertain about himself; and put the thimble resolutely down on the table. As a clue it was invaluable — as an "exhibit" useless — there was no object in appropriating it, none whatever. Nevertheless, he picked it up again, and dropped it back in his pocket. He tried to dissect the situation.

There he was, mooning about and getting sentimental over a thimble — a thimble of all things! — when he was probably on the eve of what looked like important discoveries.

Of course, the thimble might belong to another girl altogether. The old fellow might be a harmless fanatic, as he appeared; or there might exist some deep-laid scheme of which he was an integral part. Poisons now — it sounded suspicious.

And the queer old house, exactly the place where something mysterious might be expected to happen! Exactly the place that might be chosen on account of its inaccessibility and remoteness for the hatching of nefarious plots. But again, the old student and scientist might equally have selected it for the undisturbed pursuit of his own mad dreams, from the very same reasons.

"Never reject a possible clue till you have followed it to the bitter end — and sometimes beyond." That was a wise saw of the wise Chief's. Well, he must follow all this to the end — and beyond.

But there was this confounded foot of his; and the necessity of communicating with Jackson. He must keep Jackson informed of his whereabouts, but it would be very undesirable for still another stranger to be seen mooning about the neighbourhood. There was no telephone in the room, that much he could ascertain by the dim light of the oil-stove. He opened the door cautiously and peered out into the dark corridor. The house was in complete silence.

Apparently the old professor had forgotten the existence of the uninvited and unwanted guest with the hurt foot. Somewhere in the obscurity of that unknown and mysterious place — down in the room with the barred window — he was no doubt immersed in his studies, deaf and blind to all else. Morrison pulled the door partly to behind him, pausing a moment to make certain that the darkness held no unseen foe; then he drew his electric torch from his pocket and flashed it around him.

A long bare corridor stretched on either hand; at the one end was the door that he had entered by

from the garden; at the other, the nearer end, a short flight of stairs mounted. He moved cautiously towards it, helping himself along by the wall, for his injured foot was useless to him now.

The stairs, like the corridor, were bare of covering; but at the top he was surprised to find his footsteps suddenly muffled by a thick carpet. Outside the first door he came to he paused again to listen intently, then opened it, an inch or two. All was dark and quiet, within as without. He entered.

The room was a large one, and as he flashed his torch back and forth, he saw it was beautifully, even luxuriously appointed. He gazed around him in astonishment; the contrast to the rest of the place was so extreme, as yard by yard he examined it by the light thrown from his torch. Persian rugs on the floor, splendid hangings on the walls, fine old pieces of furniture here and there; but, as with the simple apartment on the floor below, the heating was, queerly enough in these days, supplied by oil-stoves, now unburning, and the lighting by oil lamps on the centre table and bookshelves.

The faintly pungent scent of stale cigar smoke hung about tenaciously; but the place had the cold feel of a room that had not been used for many days.

Yet, curiously, the long windows were draped

with heavy damask curtains, purplish-red in hue, drawn over them. But was it curious? If the apartment had been bereft of inhabitants for some time, the curtains might carelessly have been left covering the windows. Or some one might have entered recently to pull them, though if so the slight office must have been done well before the daylight faded; and one would suppose in a forsaken room that it would not have been necessary. Or perhaps for some reason undeclared—as yet—those heavy draperies were designed expressly to keep out from the light of day and from possible prying eyes something done in that room.

Morrison went to one of the windows, clicked off his torch and pulled the curtains an inch or two.

Below, the garden lay enshrouded in the falling night, dank beneath the wintry branches of the trees, and in the centre was the clearer space of stubble the old man had shown him from the room below. It all looked innocent, rather sad, forsaken. The other window, in the wall at right angles, gave, by some curious depression in the immediate foreground of the cliff, a glimpse of the sea away off, with — Morrison peered through the gathering gloom to make sure of it — the end of the little jetty sticking out into the water like a crooked finger.

He dropped the curtain back into place, frowning, busy with thought.

A room leading from this spacious apartment was, he discovered, used as an office. The blind was drawn to the window as in the large room. There was a large desk, but it was tidy and empty of papers; each drawer was securely locked. Nothing gave any clue to the business enacted there. But — there was a telephone upon it.

Without further delay, Morrison lifted up the receiver and pronounced the number of the Truro Hotel.

"That the 'Black Sheep'? I want to speak to Mr. Jackson if he's about."

"Which Mr. Jackson, sir?" came the voice of the desk clerk.

"J. T. Jackson — Jackson of the Milko Patent Food Company. Ask him to come to the 'phone, please."

The darkness and the uncanny silence of the place had begun to get on Morrison's nerves a little before he heard the welcome voice of his assistant at the other end of the wire; his brain seemed numbed of thought for a moment and he felt his forehead break out into drops of sweat. Then came Jackson's slow, rumbling tones:

"Hullo! Speaking?"

"It's Morrison." The detective spoke in low, urgent tones, as loudly as he dared, while he concentrated all the quickness of brain of which he was capable on delivering a message Jackson would understand, but which would leave a listener-in completely in the dark, as to the conversation being other than that of two commercial travellers exchanging news. "How go things?"

"Oh, nothing to grumble at here."

"*A bit low in the world with me.*" His brain was running at express speed now. (Would Jackson understand? He dared not elucidate the matter of his whereabouts more clearly.) "On the track of a thing or two, but rather uncertain. I say, Jackson, if I don't come back to-night, I may be away a few days. Meet you somewhere in this direction soon, I hope. Keep your eyes open for new business, old chap, but don't let's overlap, there's not enough room." He ended with a nervous laugh. Would Jackson know from that he wanted him handy, but that he must keep himself as much out of sight as possible? He held his breath waiting for the reply.

He heard Jackson's sonorous tones after a mere second's hesitation:

"True. *I'll be down in your neighbourhood* about this time, one of these days, perhaps to-morrow."

"Good." Morrison heaved a sigh of relief. "You might bring me a bottle of Sloan's Liniment, by the way; I had a bit of a tumble and hurt my ankle," he added casually. "Oh, nothing serious. Au 'voir, old chap."

Fumbling in the dark for the hook of the receiver with one hand, Teddie wiped the beads of perspiration from his forehead with the other.

Colossal good luck, the coming across that telephone — and no less the fact of Jackson's presence at the hotel thus early. He must evidently have got hold of some means of locomotion other than shank's pony to help him back to the town. Yes, to have established connection with Jackson at this juncture might mean everything to him.

He made his way out of the little office and through the big room again to the corridor outside. The pain in his foot had increased; he felt a bit dizzy, and he decided with a grimace that he must perforce leave further investigation of the house for the nonce, though other doors opening right and left — bedrooms he assumed — invited attention. However, sufficient unto the day. Even that hurt foot might prove a blessing in disguise; it would excuse his presence in the house and give him time for a thorough search of the place. He descended the stairs, slowly and with difficulty.

At the foot of the flight he paused. From somewhere below there came again, faintly, but sickeningly distinct, that awful sound as of an animal in extreme agony. An animal, or a child — or perhaps ——

Like lightning the thought struck into his brain, like the stroke of a knife — perhaps, a girl! Where was she, the owner of that little thimble, if not in the torture chamber of the mad Egyptologist — who, at that very moment was experimenting in poisons — and why had he, Morrison, been so blind as to ignore the obvious? Something incredibly horrible might at that instant be happening to her.

For the fraction of a second the thought paralysed him, as he stood with tight lips wet with the dew of mingled fear and pain, clinging to the rail of the bannister at the stair-foot. Then he began to hobble along the corridor towards the front door with all the speed he could make. And a second ago he had been actually congratulating himself that he could turn his disability to account, and now — suppose he were too late — suppose ——! Another little sound, a nearer one, caused him to stop and crouch against the wall. It was the noise of a key turning in the lock.

# CHAPTER X

From the slight suffusion of light that threw a feeble beam across the bare boards of the corridor, Morrison realised that the open door of the sitting-room was only a few feet away. He had left that door a little ajar, he remembered. Now he threw himself towards it, jerked swiftly through and fell into a chair just inside and almost behind the door, waiting in breathless expectation for the next move in the game. But even in his excitement he realised that the wailing from below had ceased.

He had not long to wait. The front door opened, closed again, and a second later a figure came into the room.

She was wearing the same grey cloak he had seen her in on the cliff-walk that day; but even without that, Morrison would have recognised her instantly. Recognised the wide-open, startled eyes of misty grey, like the feathers of a dove, the pale sweet face with its expression as of one interrupted in an anxious dream, but now less anxious, less fearful, as he saw her in the full warm glow from the stove. She came in as if expecting to see some

one there, the old man perhaps. She glanced round and not seeing him, but a stranger in his place, raised her hand involuntarily to her lips and gave an alarmed cry.

He rose awkwardly, clinging to the table for support, and addressed her:

"I'm afraid I've frightened you. I hurt my foot by a fall and found myself at the door of this house, and was most hospitably received by ——" he hesitated.

"My father?"

"Perhaps — by Professor Price."

"Yes. There is no one else here — just now," she volunteered, and added constrainedly, and as though she were repeating a lesson — "I am afraid we see so few visitors that we do not —— "

"Encourage them?" he finished the sentence for her with a smile. "So I understood. I am the more grateful for his — your kindness."

The girl was looking at him with puckered brows. He felt thankful he still retained the dark glasses and the small black moustache; but even so, he had an odd feeling that beneath those transparent disguises she was puzzled by some dim remembrance, vaguely beset by a recollection that disturbed her. The very last thing he wanted at this juncture was that anything should remind her of

that meeting in the Cologne studio. He must do all in his power to dissociate himself from any fleeting memory of that meeting, and he said hastily:

"I ought to introduce myself. My name is Gascoigne — Teddie Gascoigne — and I'm travelling for a firm, Patent Foods. My present headquarters is Truro, and I've been hoping to get a few orders from the villages round about. But I fell down a queer hole in the cliff and landed, as you see, here."

"Oh! The old lift-shaft. And you have hurt your foot," she seemed reassured. "I was forgetting. I will get a light."

She found matches on the mantelpiece, but before applying a light to the oil lamp standing on the table, she crossed the room to the window and drew the curtains. It struck Teddie as a little odd, this reversal of the usual order of things.

"Now let me see."

She was on her knees before him and he felt the soft pressure of her little hands about his ankle. It was delicious, that gentle manipulative movement, even though the slightest touch hurt like the dickens. To see her on her knees before him, so sweetly ministering, was almost more than he could stand.

"I'm afraid it is dreadfully swollen. We may have to cut away the boot. Wait, I have scissors, here ——"

"Not so bad as all that, I hope." He made light of it. "I'll have a shot at getting it off first."

He succeeded in dragging off that boot with considerable pain and trouble and the help she insisted on giving in spite of his protestations. For the moment all other thoughts were driven out of his mind — the reason for his being in that strange house — the old man doing his gruesome work, whatever it was, in the cellar below — the very relief that had flooded over him when he had found his fears for her safety unrealised.

"You had better put that foot up on the sofa here," she said with tender practicality. "Give me your arm and I will help you to it. There, that's better. Now stay there till I get a compress of sorts."

She went quickly out of the room and closed the door after her, picking up the grey cloak from the chair where she had dropped it and carrying it away with her. A few minutes later she returned, bringing a bowl of water and some old linen handkerchiefs; and, in spite of his protests on the score of the trouble he was giving, she insisted on wrapping the swollen ankle about with the cold bandages, replacing them every few minutes.

The way she had taken charge of the situation was a new experience for Morrison, himself accus-

tomed to manage events; and the deftness of her woman's touch as she worked without fuss to alleviate his injury, was balm both to flesh and soul.

"You're kindness itself," he tried to express his gratitude. "But I don't think it's worth all the trouble you're going to."

"I don't know," she returned. "I think you've bruised and strained it rather badly, though I don't believe any bones are broken. You have been using it when you oughtn't, that's the whole bother. Now, will you promise not to move from that sofa till I come back?" She looked down at him with a sweet severity and added, "I usually go for a stroll in the afternoon and my father will wonder what has happened if I seem to be back later than usual. Besides, there's tea."

"You are here alone with your father?" he ventured. Somehow those few moments of solitude with her seemed rare and precious to Morrison and he wanted to prolong them as much as possible. The question had been asked more at random than with any real desire for information, but the moment the words were out of his mouth he saw by the expression on her face that they had disturbed her. The startled look returned to her grey eyes and he forced his thoughts back to the real point at issue, instantly on the alert once more.

"We are alone — at present," she answered reluctantly, pausing on her way to the door.

Those rooms above, with the oddly luxurious furnishings, returned to his mind with sudden clarity.

"Not always then?" he pursued casually.

"No — not always." She scanned his face anxiously, and went on, as if something she saw there had dragged the unwilling information out of her. "Mr. Silverton and his brother stay here for a few days every month."

In the little pause that followed, while Morrison was groping in his mind to find the true significance of this statement of hers, the girl went quietly out of the room again.

Morrison remained on his sofa frowning into the red glow of the stove. Those few words had aroused all his temporarily sleeping suspicions afresh. The Silvertons owned the almost deserted clay quarries. Those jewels he had tracked down in Cologne had been hidden in soft clay, and the girl had been the medium of their conveyance. Once again, the possible connection smote him; and once again he rejected it as being too utterly fantastic.

Obviously there was a very important link in the chain of circumstances missing. It was too ridiculous to imagine it necessary to work a whole clay-

mine in order to supply sufficient to wrap up a few diamonds!

There was nothing for it but to go slowly ahead, taking each step of the way as he came to it and scanning it in the light of all that had already been revealed. And in any case, where did the mad old scientist who experimented in Egyptian poisons and made a hobby of growing wheat from seed found in the tomb of two-thousand-year-old Pharaohs come into it all? *Had* Heath been killed by poison? That was a matter, at any rate, verifiable: something which they were able to make sure of by medical testimony.

Yet, ten minutes later, when the girl came back into the room followed by the scientist himself, even with the agonised cries he had heard issuing from that underground cellar still fresh in his memory, he found it impossible to associate the innocent blue eyes of the old fellow and his air of polite and gentle abstraction, with the horrible idea of murder, and murder carried out deliberately and cold-bloodedly, as it must needs have been. The thin white locks and frail hands, his emaciated body and timid air, struck Morrison afresh, in strange contrast to the gruesome task from which, even now, he had torn himself, and of which he had unashamedly spoken to a complete stranger. Still less could

he credit that the girl of the misty grey eyes could be willingly connected, even remotely, with such happenings. They looked more like a couple of rather lonely children than criminals!

She set down the tray she was carrying and prepared herself to the business of dispensing tea, her small hands moving in the homely task with a grace that fascinated Morrison. Circumventing his quick motion to rise from the couch, she handed him a cup.

"No, don't get up. That would spoil all the good we were trying to do to that foot of yours. My father and I insist that you should stay here, at least for to-night, if ——" she flushed a little diffidently, as if conscious of the poorness of the proposed hospitality, "if you can sleep on that couch. Indeed, there's nothing else to be done. We are a long way from the station and you could never walk it, with your foot swollen like that."

Morrison was about to protest when the old gentleman broke in with his singularly gentle air of courtesy:

"It is the least thing we can do, to offer shelter and a bed to an injured man. Pray accept them with our apologies that they are not more comfortable."

Teddie's first instinct was an unconditional

refusal. He had been deliberately trying to lead up to this; yet he was conscious of a feeling of extreme meanness. It was like taking advantage of the trustfulness of children to accept their hospitality, to have planned in his mind to accept it, in order that he might ferret out their secrets and possibly reward them by betrayal. Yet, there was Heath — there was his duty to the Chief and his chosen profession; he mustn't be soft; he must wrestle with that encroaching sense of weakness occasioned, inconsequently enough, under the circumstances, by the grey eyes and the tender hands of that ministering girl. He steeled himself deliberately to murmur his thanks:

"It's more than good of you, and I'm tremendously grateful — if you are sure I shan't be trespassing ——"

"Not a bit," the girl responded lightly. "You will really be doing us a kindness ——"

She broke off. The old man looked troubled.

"You live in a very remote place," Morrison filled in the rather awkward pause conversationally. "Don't you find it lonely on occasions? Or do you only spend a few weeks here now and then — like Mr. Silverton?" He helped himself to bread and butter. "You go abroad perhaps?"

He could feel the panic in the silence following

the question and see it in the startled glance she threw at him; a quick, penetrative glance that seemed to make his dark glasses and moustache look particularly silly as a disguise. For an instant he felt certain she had recognised him and that he had made an irretrievable blunder in trying to force her hand. The old man had apparently noticed nothing. And then, a soft scratching and whimpering at the door relieved the tension. She sprang up and opened it. A small Scotch terrier came in, walked dejectedly and with apparent difficulty to the stove and lay down in the glow of it, shivering.

"It's Nelly Bligh," the girl said, watching the little dog's slow progress across the floor in some anxiety. "She doesn't look well, Father." She picked up the animal and caressed it on her lap. The little dog looked up with pitiful eyes, then attempted to lick her hand with a feeble tongue. This action seemed to galvanize the old man into life. He leaped up and seized Nelly Bligh from the girl's knees.

"Don't let her lick your hand, Julia," he quavered excitedly, hugging the little dog to his breast as if to keep her as far as possible from contact with his daughter. Julia stared up at him in rebuking amazement.

"But why, Father?"

"She's not been very well, Julia. She's been ill. I think — " the professor mumbled over his words, " — she has eaten something that disagreed with her. There, lie by the fire, Nelly, good dog." He put her down gently and patted her rough little head; she remained where he had placed her without protest or movement.

Morrison now felt certain that the cries he had heard had emanated from Julia's little dog, on whom the professor had been experimenting with his Egyptian poisons. But the professor would hardly confine his experimenting to animals. There would come a time when the effects would have to be tried on human beings, if indeed, as seemed possible, examples had not already been made. Who, he wondered, would be the next victim of his researches? Who more likely than some one placed by inadvertence in the old man's power?

He looked apprehensively at the bent head of the girl, Julia, who was gazing with commiseration at the dog stretched before the fire. Shivers ran every now and then through Nelly Bligh's unfortunate little frame. The old professor remained stooping forward and staring down at her too, but in a different fashion.

There was something peculiarly nauseating in the cold, detached way in which he was observing

her. He saw the girl raise her head and look fixedly at her father, as if the dawn of a suspicion had entered her mind, saw the growing horror in her eyes as if her suspicion had been transmuted into a certainty. No wonder she had the eyes of a frightened dove!

Morrison felt a cold shiver course inch by inch down his spine.

# CHAPTER XI

He had much to occupy his thoughts that night, as he lay on the improvised bed Julia Price had made up for him on the couch in the sitting-room, clad in a worn suit of the old professor's pyjamas. She and her father had retired early, soon after the simple supper she had prepared had been disposed of and the visitor's room had been arranged. Listening intently as the door closed behind them — she had put Nelly Bligh, the sick Scotch terrier, in a basket and, palely determined, carried her off with her in spite of her father's eager warnings — Teddy felt sure that the two had not ascended the stairs. The doors he heard open and shut were along the same corridor as the one in which his own "bedroom" was situated. He must have heard their footsteps on the uncarpeted stairs if they had gone up. The upstairs rooms, he gathered from that fact, were occupied by the Silverton brothers.

Uppermost in his mind was the strange and thrilling thought of his presence under the very same roof as the grey-eyed girl who, in spite of everything, had so seized on his imagination the moment

he first saw her in that Cologne studio. What queer chance was it that had brought them across each other's paths again, and at this, their third meeting, consigned them to a night — perhaps several nights and several days — in proximity to each other? What, indeed? No chance, but the grim pursuit of the destroyer of his best friend, Heath.

The stark fact was, that where the stolen Oppenhaupt diamonds had been found, there was the girl — where Heath had met his death, there she was also. Over and over his mind turned the thing, seeking this way and that for a solution, but always it came back to the grim truth that nothing could alter. Against it, he had only his own convictions, his own desire to believe her innocent, his own — yes, he admitted it — his own love for her. Love, for a girl who was perhaps a thief, perhaps something worse! It was a wry joke indeed, that Fate saw fit to play upon him.

Visualising, in the darkness of the strange room in the uncanny quiet — and surely down in that hollow of the hills was the quietest place on earth — her beauty, the softness of those magical grey eyes of hers, the tenderness of her touch to his injured foot, her gentle movements, her care for her father, her concern for the wretched little dog; his mind rebelled against belief in her guilt. It was

beyond all reason! He held fast to that look of horror in her eyes, when the reluctant suspicion that the professor had been tampering with her pet dog had evidently crossed her mind. She might not be a party to those experiments. There was no reason, indeed, why she should be. But what was she doing in that house? What was there to prevent her going from it, leaving it and the whole mystery behind her if she were not in some definite way mixed up with it? There was something at the back of all this yet unfathomed. He was fighting an unknown foe, something intangible as a cloud, or as the Cornish mist that came so unexpectedly and obscured everything so bafflingly. But now, since he realised his love for Julia, the task before him was a doubly difficult one. He had to avenge the death of his friend and at the same time to clear the character of Julia Price.

The more he thought about it, the more certain he felt that she was not in league with the old man in his research. Such a girl could have no interest in the production of a poison that would wipe out England's enemies wholesale! The more certain he was of that, the more eager he felt to put his theory of the poisoning of Heath to the test. If he had come by his death that way, he would know that Julia was exonerated, and that Heath had been the unfortu-

nate medium for experiment by the mad professor, and by him alone.

But there had been the constable too — P. C. Davies, who had been found on the hillside with his head broken in, several days before the " tramp's " death.

At the time Davies died, the girl had been in Cologne. The two deaths within so short a time of each other might have been coincidence, of course; or they might be a definite link in the iron chain of crime and deceit he was trying to break.

The morning light was struggling through the chintz curtains when he fell asleep at length. Scarcely an hour later he woke to see the girl depositing a tray on a small table she had brought close to the couch the night before. He had barely time to don his dark glasses before she turned to face him.

" Breakfast," she said cheerily. " It's nearly nine. Is the foot hurting you?"

He sat up. " Thanks awfully. You shouldn't have troubled. I could quite well have come to the breakfast table."

" Oh, we breakfasted an hour ago." She pulled back the curtains, applied a match to the stove and went about putting the room skilfully to rights. " My father likes to get to his work as soon as there's

enough daylight, now that the days are so short."

That reminded him of the little dog.

"How's Nelly Bligh this morning?"

"She doesn't seem very well." The girl shot an anxiously guarded look at him under her dark lashes. "She won't take her milk, poor little thing. Are you sure you have everything you want?"

"Everything, thanks immensely. You have some one to help you — you don't do it all yourself?" He waved his cup vaguely round the room. She smiled.

"A woman comes up from the village every day to do the rough work. She will be late to-day."

"The village! A deuce of a way for a woman to come, isn't it?"

"Oh, not very far." She looked at him again, hesitatingly, as if trying to make up her mind whether it would be discreet to trust him with even such trivial confidences. Not apparently being completely sure, she added nothing to her vague statement, but with the remark, "I hope you won't move till I have looked at that foot," went out again.

Morrison cogitated on the woman from the village as he ate his breakfast. The servants in a house were often most helpful and a few gleams of hope certainly lay in the direction of this one being able (and willing) to shed light on the affair. Some one

fresh on the scene would give new impetus to thought, anyhow.

Being a bachelor of tidy habits, by the time the girl returned he had risen from the couch, donned a threadbare old dressing gown of the professor's which she had placed near him, and folded his blankets and sheets into a neat pile on the sofa, thus restoring to the room a certain amount of its accustomed neatness. To his disgust, he found these small matters were only attended to by dint of considerable difficulty, for his foot was swollen almost out of recognition and extremely painful.

"I warned you," she said gently, while she bathed and bound the offending member after anointing it with some pungent-smelling ointment. "You can't possibly use that foot."

"But I *must* use it," Teddie cried exasperatedly. "I'm not going to let the darned thing get the better of me like that. What about my — business? Besides, I can't possibly foist myself on you indefinitely like this."

"Mr. Gascoigne," she said simply, "that foot won't be fit to be used for days, perhaps weeks. Of course, you could get a car to come from Truro and take you there, if you really insisted; but I think you would be much wiser not to disturb it at least for a couple of days. It would be asking for trouble

to stand on it at all. I — my father and I — would be pleased if you would stay; and I really *can* look after you quite nicely, you know."

"I am certain of that," Teddie returned with conviction.

"Is your business so very urgent that no one else can do it for you?" she demanded with a whimsical smile.

"I am afraid it is. But I think I can do a certain amount of it here." There was a grimness about the remark which he hoped was not detected by Julia. "Thanks, and ever thanks."

"I'll bring you hot water and father's shaving tackle," she told him, and flitted away again. "Now keep your foot up, please."

She was one of those delightful women, he thought with a wave of gratitude, who are never so happy as when they are ministering to some one needing their help. In truth, the prospect of days spent with her in that isolated place — strange and uncanny and steeped in he knew not what of the sinister, as it was — glowed through him like a warm ray of sunshine. That injured foot was nothing short of a godsend from whatever point of view he regarded it. It both kept him near Julia and gave him all the excuse he wanted for remaining in the

mysterious house till he had thoroughly investigated it. His star was certainly in the ascendent.

No newspapers appearing, Morrison dozed on his couch off and on during the morning, while Julia in a blue-grey linen smock and a pair of old gloves was busy with her household duties in other parts of the house. The old man did not appear, neither did Nelly Bligh, the Scotch terrier. Once during the morning that symbolical mist swooped down on them, and leaned against the windows, blotting out the entire universe and leaving only the silent house and its inhabitants stranded in a world of their own. Intriguingly sweet, that queer moment of isolation, for it happened on one of Julia's fleeting visits, and they two seemed alone in the whole wide earth; sweet, and devoid of the ugly problems that crowded about the clear day, but transitory ——

At lunch-time the table was set by a strange woman who gave him one glance and then proceeded with her duties, having obviously been informed of his presence. He recognised her immediately — the red-faced woman who had been disinclined to serve tramps in the little shop near the jetty, and from whom he had bought acid-drops, having fortunately failed to interest her in Patent Foods. That the recognition was mutual he ascertained from a loud whisper outside the door. "It's the very same

gen'elman, miss, who came into my shop yesterday — a travelling gen'elman selling Post-Toasties or such like ——" and he mentally both blessed and cursed because it would probably put the girl on the *qui vive* as to his obvious interest in the neighbourhood, an interest sufficient to bring him to the spot two days in succession.

Julia, if she noticed it, made no sign. The old man shambled in on her heels, looked at Morrison in a puzzled way as if he wondered vaguely why his sofa should be occupied by a strange male person reclining in a dressing-gown, and that his own, and began to eat without a word. Presently he pushed his plate away fretfully, and cried: " Where is Nelly?"

The girl put her hand on his arm, as if he were a child that must be soothed. " She isn't well, Father. I am keeping her warm. She won't eat anything."

" I want Nelly," he cried violently, and banged his fist on the table. " I am used to having Nelly about, I can't work without her. I miss her."

" I'll bring her to you, dear, presently, when she is better," Julia whispered, stroking his arm and endeavouring to calm him. " Won't you show Mr. Gascoigne some of your beautiful models?"

" Gascoigne? Gascoigne?" The old professor looked wildly around. " Who is Gascoigne? Ah!—

my models! Would you like to see my Egyptian models, Mr. Gascoigne?"

His voice was all eagerness; he had forgotten Nelly Bligh in the new line of thought Julia had inculcated in his brain.

"Certainly, sir. Nothing would give me greater pleasure," Morrison replied gravely.

The old man made as if to rise from the table. "But *please* finish your lunch first," Morrison begged hastily, and the professor obediently sat down again, and despatched the remainder of his meal with great speed, his mind obviously running on the precious treasures he was about to exhibit. Muttering an excuse, he trotted off presently, and Julia threw Morrison a helpless look across the table.

"He is a little nervous and highly strung," he volunteered, to reassure her.

"Yes, that is all," she replied earnestly, leaning towards him. "Nervous, highly strung. Not mad! I can assure you he is not mad, only obsessed by these dreadful Egyptian discoveries of his. And they encourage him, they make him worse ——"

"They?——"

"All for their own ends ——" she cried wildly, and stopped. "Oh, I ought not to be talking like this! If they knew ——"

Morrison stretched a hand across the table and covered her own small one with it.

"Miss Price, they will never know," he said gently. "I feel you are in some great trouble — won't you trust me, let me try to help you? Tell me something about it so that I can try and help you."

Julia looked at him for a moment uncertainly, waveringly, then, as if she suddenly remembered something she had forgotten for a moment and had no right to forget, withdrew her hand from his clasp and covered her eyes with it. He felt that she was making a desperate effort to recover the composure that had broken down under some protracted, tremendous strain, and that she could accomplish it best if he maintained silence.

The next moment, the old professor had shuffled back into the room, carrying in his arms a number of small figures wrapped carefully about with a cloth; and the girl had risen from her place and was proceeding to pack the china on a tray, quietly and composedly as if nothing had happened to disturb her tranquillity.

# CHAPTER XII

THE important event of the day was the possible arrival of Jackson, for Morrison devoutly hoped his somewhat cryptic telephone message would have the effect of bringing his assistant to the house that afternoon, for he felt that it was vital to see and talk matters over with him before he carried on much further.

He was, accordingly, relieved when the old professor ambled off to the resumption of his work, having exhibited with pride his collection of Egyptian figures. Morrison was wholeheartedly enthusiastic about them. He knew no more of sculpture than the ordinary man who makes an occasional perfunctory visit to the British Museum, and these wonderfully symbolised and conventionalised studies in miniature of Egyptian gods, priestesses and kings, were almost a revelation to him.

He could hardly have wormed his way into the professor's confidence, if anything were to be gained by that, in a more successful manner than by praising his beloved collection, and he did it quite sincerely. It was pathetic to see the old man's childish delight in his enthusiasm.

But at last he was gone, holding his models to his heart as carefully as if they were living beings.

"I'm mighty sleepy," Morrison told Julia with a boyish yawn, "and if you're taking your usual constitutional I'll lie here and have a nap. I might just as well take full advantage of this opportunity to indulge my native laziness, don't you think?"

She pulled the rug round his feet, smiling down at him. "If you are quite sure you'll be happy? I shall be back before tea-time. There is actually a glint of sun."

"I should be thoroughly miserable if I thought you had curtailed your usual walk on my account, Miss Price. Are you taking Nelly Bligh?"

"I'm afraid Nelly Bligh isn't up to the walk, poor darling." She looked anxious, her brows puckered into a wistful frown. "I'm rather worried as to what to do with her."

"Let me look after her while you are gone."

She hesitated. "If you will keep her with you ——"

He understood her to mean that she did not want the little dog to fall into the professor's hands again.

"She shan't go out of my sight," he declared.

Julia thanked him and brought Nelly's basket, in which the animal lay stretched, and deposited it under the curved head of the sofa, well out of

sight. Then, with a smile, she went away and, a few minutes later he heard the front door close behind her.

That these precautions with regard to poor Nelly were justified was apparent not ten minutes after Julia's departure, for suddenly the old scientist burst into the room and agitatedly asked the whereabouts of the dog.

"I like to have her with me," he cried restlessly, twisting his hands. "I miss her when she is not there."

"Miss Julia has taken her for a walk," Morrison fibbed, devoutly hoping Nelly would not make her presence known. Then, on a sudden thought, he asked directly: "Professor, why don't you choose something else for your experiments than your daughter's pet dog?"

Mr. Price looked blank, then hung his head like a child caught in a naughty act. But suddenly he raised it again, defiantly.

"In the interests of science, sir ——" he began with a dignified gesture.

"Nonsense," interrupted Morrison genially.

"Nonsense? How then, sir, should I make these necessary tests which are to lead the way to the greatest discovery of all time? What shall I use, if not dogs, sir? Human beings?"

"Frogs, sir; rats, sir; birds, sir; if you must use anything," Morrison replied with equal seriousness. "Anything, rather than a favourite animal belonging to your daughter."

"But she does not know," whispered the old fellow, looking covertly at Morrison. "You won't tell her, will you? It would upset her dreadfully. She would never forgive me. You won't tell her?"

"I won't, if you will promise me not to repeat the experiment."

The old man sighed, nodded in acquiescence, and, shambling out, turned and looked over his shoulder again at his guest's recumbent figure, in such a secretive, covert, crafty way, that Teddie had an unpleasant feeling that the old boy had suddenly become aware of his eligibility as Nelly's successor.

The afternoon wore slowly on. He wished Jackson would come. The enforced idleness of the past day — he had been chained to that couch for nearly twenty-four hours — was beginning to get a little on his nerves, for he was essentially a man of action. At the same time he realised the wisdom of it. He had to get that sprained ankle well. At no very distant date he might want all the energy a strong man possessed; one never knew in his job. And meantime, irksome as it might be, he could not be

better placed for keeping an eye on the business of the moment.

He had almost given Jackson up, and in the darkening quietude had very nearly succumbed to the drowsy warmth of the room, when he heard a slight tap on the window-pane. So slight a noise, indeed, that it might have been made by the scraping of a twig against the glass. He swung himself off the sofa and hopped to the window. A second later he had carefully thrust up the lower sash and was peering out. He saw a figure crouching against the wall, and leaned over to whisper.

"It's all right, Jackson. In you come. Right-o!"

Jackson's burly form hauled itself through the frame of the window, and Teddie slid the sash down again softly.

"Well, here you are, skipper! Glad to see you again, sir. Much damage to that leg o' yours? Some one's been giving you first aid, I see."

"A bit of a twist, Jackson, that's all. Listen — we've only a moment, some one may be here directly. There are queer things going on in the house, Jackson. How queer, I don't know yet. They may mean nothing. They may mean a lot. I intend to remain till I've found out which — this confounded foot is sufficient excuse. Oh, they're looking after me well, don't worry. I want you to

arrange for a post-mortem examination on the body of Mr. Heath. Poison suspected. If anything suspicious is discovered, you'd better have Davies exhumed and an examination made on him, too. Got a bit of paper on you? Here, that's my recommendation."

He scribbled a few lines on a leaf torn from the notebook Jackson took from his pocket, signed it and handed it back to him.

"H'm!" said Jackson, pocketing it. "Davies had his head beat in and Mr. Heath got a bruise on his temple, they say. Just in case you'd forgotten it, sir."

"I hadn't forgotten it," returned the detective thoughtfully. "But look here ——" He stooped down and dragged forward the basket containing the form of the little dog, Nelly Bligh. "There's an old man here who's experimenting in poisons and ——"

"Tried it on the dog," suggested Jackson helpfully as he bent forward and stared down at the poor dog.

Even as he spoke, a violent tremor ran over the little frame; Nelly gave a deep sigh and stretched out stiff.

"Well, I never!" ejaculated Morrison's assistant, goggling. "Dyin' on us, like that!"

Teddie put a hand down and felt the body of the dog.

"Yes, I'm afraid she's dead," he acquiesced after a moment, and added absent-mindedly, "Poor Julia!"

"Julia is 'er name? Uncommon name for a dog, sir."

Teddie gently pushed the basket back under the sofa.

"Well, that's one of the old chap's murders," he said, rather bitterly. "It's just on the cards that his experiments have gone farther afield than his own household. In fact, I'm half expecting to be his next victim myself."

"Now you mustn't talk like that, sir, you're just down in the mouth, what with that fall and being cooped up in this hole." Jackson's long grey moustache twitched in a slightly contemptuous fashion.

"You had no difficulty in finding me, anyhow," Teddie remarked with a smile. "I want you to keep observation over the place, get down here about this time as often as possible — I'll try and arrange that the coast is clear for you, but if you don't see me, don't worry — and report any new events. Otherwise, keep pretty close to the hotel. There's a telephone upstairs which I could use in case of emergency."

"Right, sir — by the way, here's your liniment."

Teddie smiled.

"I wouldn't dare use it, Jackson. There's a girl here, the old poison fellow's daughter, who wraps me up in cold compresses and things. She's ——" he stopped.

"Ah!" Jackson smiled too, a thought enigmatically. "The lady of the vanishing act, up on the cliff, I suppose, sir?"

"There's no action we can take at the moment; just watch and wait while I get this darned foot better." Teddie ignored Jackson's sly remark. "Oh, there's one thing — the boots at the hotel ——"

A faint sound of the key turning in a lock reached their ears. At a signal from Morrison Jackson sprang to the window with surprising agility for one of his size, opened it and dropped on the soft earth outside without a word, with scarcely a sound. Morrison, with equal celerity for a man with a sprained and swollen ankle, shut it down noiselessly after him, and in one leap was back on his sofa with the rug well over his legs before the girl came into the room.

She seated herself on a chair near the stove, still in her long grey cloak; she had pulled off her hat, and the dark mass of her hair shone in the glow

from the fire. Her cheeks were pink from the fresh air; she seemed almost to have lost her usual air of timid constraint.

"Well?" she asked, with a faint welcoming smile.

"You ought always to wear grey, Miss Price," he remarked, apropos of nothing. "It suits the place — suits you. You should have a little soft hat the same colour as your cloak." For a moment that scene in the room of a German town, a room littered with smashed plaster casts and overturned furniture, rose vividly before him.

"I had one once," he was scarcely surprised to hear her say, negligently.

And lost it in a Cologne studio, he thought; and wondered what she would have said or done if he had voiced the thought — and if she had known that the little hat was reposing at that very moment in the bottom of his suitcase in the Truro Hotel.

"You must have another," he said aloud. "I say, let me give you one! When I get back to Truro — will you? As a mark of my appreciation of your kindness."

The girl sat very, very still; and Morrison felt suddenly ashamed of this surreptitious baiting to which he was subjecting her. He had an uneasy feeling that she thoroughly understood his object.

It was the second time he had done it — the first had been when he had suggested that perhaps she spent a good deal of her time on the continent to avoid the loneliness of this Cornish home.

"Thank you," she said presently in a rather lifeless tone. "But I may come across the other one, though I think I must have lost it somewhere abroad. Perhaps in Cologne."

Morrison gasped. She had taken his own weapon out of his hand to use it against him, whether in all innocence or out of sheer cleverness. That answer of hers surely meant that she was either completely unaware of his connection with the Cologne episode, or else that she saw through his disguise and was deliberately challenging him to come out into the open.

The time was not ripe for that yet; and though the ugly beast Suspicion raised its rampant head again, he swiftly decided that he must at least superficially ignore the challenge. He must withdraw the threatened check to the queen — surely it was an unwise move at this stage of the game, thus early to tempt providence by putting her on her guard against him. Why on earth had he said that? Looking narrowly at the pale oval of her face in the subdued light, he tried to fathom the reason for her counter to his move; and was surprised to see the

tranquillity of her expression suddenly broken by that pitifully habitual gleam of fear that had leapt to her eyes. It was as though she had all at once become aware that she had again unconsciously put her questioner into possession of facts she ought not to have disclosed; as though she had been magnetised into doing so against her will; as though subconsciously *her mind had acted under direction from his.*

# CHAPTER XIII

To Morrison, there was something very disconcerting in the revelation that the vivid impression he had got of the Cologne studio and his concentrated desire to fathom the mystery of this girl, had resulted in a practical hypnotism of her into speaking the truth. It was disconcerting because it meant that she was the unhappy possessor of one of those extremely delicately balanced mentalities that respond, like the string of a violin, to the slightest pressure; because, therefore, this doubtful gift was capable of being exploited by a ruthless or unscrupulous influence to her own detriment. Any powerful effort of will directed over her might utilize these mediumistic gifts; and where might not that lead? Down strange paths, certainly. Her present inexplicable situation might be due entirely to some sinister influence working on her — but again, for what ends?

If the investigations of the Secret Service as exemplified in the personal activities of Captain Edward Gascoigne Morrison went no farther than the capture of the diamond thieves, in whose hands she was a tool, well, the thing seemed plain sailing

enough. It would be his duty to arrest this girl, as he had so often told himself, and hand her over to justice as an accomplice. But what of the tragic deaths of his friend Heath and of the constable — what of the queer old man who was on the track of revolutionising the warfare of the world — what of the deserted quarries in the hillside and, above all, what of the phantom train that killed whoever was so unlucky as to behold it? Then again, there were those people of whom she seemed so afraid; presumably the brothers Silverton who were the occasional occupants of the luxurious upstairs chambers.

The discovery of Julia's capability of hypnotism put a power in his hands, Morrison felt, that chivalry forbade him to use — chivalry, and the unfortunate love that was fast crystallising in his heart for her. And yet, strict adherence to his duty bade him devote every weapon at his command to the undoing of this extremely knotty skein of intrigue and crime.

All these thoughts passed like lightning through the detective's brain as he watched her sitting so quietly before him in the darkening room. She looked so childishly forlorn with her dark hair a little loosened and falling about her face, with her frightened eyes bent full on him, that he made an impulsive gesture of sympathy towards her with his

hand and laid it for a moment reassuringly on her arm, seeking in his mind for something to divert her attention from her thoughts.

"I ought to have told you before," he began. "I am afraid poor little ——"

Instantly she divined what he would say. "Nelly Bligh?" She rose from her chair, and groped under the couch-head for Nelly's basket. Drawing it out she knelt staring down at the pitiful little figure. "Oh, poor Nelly! She's — dead?"

Morrison nodded.

"I'm afraid so." He saw the tears gathering in her eyes, and falling one by one on the little furry form in the basket. Julia made no attempt to hide them; her distress at the untimely end of her pet was great, and she seemed, for the moment, to have forgotten completely the presence of her injured guest, as she knelt on the floor and mourned over the dog.

Presently he could bear it no longer and, acting under an irresistible instinct, sitting up on the couch he stretched out and put an arm round her shoulder, drawing her towards him. She lay against his breast unresisting, like an innocent child who weeps over a broken toy; and Teddie, though everything in him longed to comfort her with endearments, could make no attempt to caress her beyond the

encircling of her slender body with his arm. At that moment anything more would have seemed like sacrilege; so innocently she accepted his attempts to soothe her.

Presently she sighed heavily, disengaged herself gently from his arm, dried her eyes and stood up.

"I am sorry to have been so silly," she said mournfully. "I was very fond of Nelly Bligh. She was the only thing I had to love, except my father. And now he has killed her! How cruel!" She seemed lost in reflection of the strange fact that one she loved should have been cruel.

Neither of them heard the door open and the old man come in, but he stood there in the lamp-lit room beside them, reminding Teddie more than ever, with his frail face, his white hair and burning eyes, of some ancient prophet of Bible days. He felt sorry for the old boy and the fanaticism that obsessed him; but Julia turned on him like an avenging priestess, with an intensity of anger that surprised Teddie as much as the old fellow himself.

"You have killed Nelly Bligh!" she accused him. "You wicked, cruel man! You tortured her till she died. How could you? You thought I knew nothing of your experiments on my little dog: but I knew, I knew all the time and I hate you for what

you have done!" Then, sobbing, Julia ran quickly out of the room.

The professor turned to Morrison, a look of the keenest distress mingled with amazement in his eyes. "You told her!" he whispered. "Oh, why did you do it?"

"I didn't. She guessed, as any one would. Mr. Price, I'm afraid you have upset your daughter badly."

"Yes, I could see that." The old man considered the matter, pulling at his beard agitatedly. "I am sorry to have hurt Julia. I have never seen her angry before."

He looked down at Nelly's basket that lay between them on the floor; and added, in an access of anxiety: "And all my experimenting has gone for nothing! I ought to have watched her, to have had her under my observation, seen how the poison worked and the time and manner of the death of the subject. The lassitude, the heavy sweating, the partial paralysis — she should not have died. It would have been invaluable. Instead, Julia took her for a walk, and I saw nothing. Nothing! What a waste! You understand, I did not desire to kill, but to temporarily paralyse—— Now I shall have to begin all over again. These interferences with my research are unwarrantable, unwarrantable!"

The old professor assumed a pitiful sort of offended dignity, quite oblivious of Julia and her tears; and Morrison, seeing that all argument was useless, forbore speech.

# PART II

# CHAPTER XIV

For the next several days affairs in the strange house hidden below the quarry in the hillside moved tranquilly enough. Morrison found himself still unable to use his foot, and Julia insisted on his keeping to the couch in the sitting-room, and upon dressing the injured member every hour or so with cold compresses and bandage of areca nut. She equipped him with garments from the old professor's somewhat threadbare wardrobe, brought him his meals, and generally waited on him with a graceful tenderness that enveloped him still more inevitably. Since the death of her little dog she had treated the old man with a marked disapproval that he seemed to feel deeply. Julia was unable to forgive him yet, it seemed; and the old fellow worried over it in an absent-minded sort of way, when he thought of anything beyond his beloved models and his experiments, and grew frailer and whiter and more prophet-like every day.

To Teddie, watching with careful observation for any sign that might help him in his quest, they seemed like a couple of misguided children at cross-purposes with each other.

One fact puzzled him, and that was Julia's apparent inclination to keep him, Morrison, in the house. He was nothing loth as long as circumstances made it impossible or difficult to continue his investigations actively; but his sprained foot was improving daily and soon it would no longer be possible for him to make it an excuse for remaining about the place. Sterner measures must soon be taken to bring the various attributes of the situation into line; even now he was beginning to feel a little uneasy in his conscience about it all.

"Keep ahead of your job," he seemed to hear the Chief's warning voice. "Never let anything interfere with it or let it get on top of you. It'll be worse to-morrow." But he was still unable with any comfort to do more than hobble about the room, garbed in the old professor's dressing-gown and slippers — the ankle was still too swollen to get a boot on — though he was feeling the gradual return of that nervous energy which he needed to enable him to get on top of his job. But it was more difficult to obey the Chief's dictum to "let nothing interfere with it." His duty warred sadly with the delicious sense of respite he was indulging in, and with the new and intense pleasure it gave him to be near the girl with the misty grey eyes. A wonderful interlude in his busy life it was, an interlude for dreams

of love; dreams, nevertheless violently overshadowed by the dark cloud of suspicion that every now and then loomed on the horizon of his thoughts. So the days went by till they lengthened into weeks.

Every afternoon the girl took her solitary walk along the cliffs, returning at dusk, while the old man was busy in his underground cellar. And Jackson managed to make several visits to his immediate chief during these hours. In one of these earlier ones he brought results of the post-mortem examination Morrison had advised on Heath's body.

"Not a trace of poison, sir."

"Ah!" Morrison was disturbed and thoughtful. "Another little clue gone west, Jackson. The examination revealed nothing else likely to cause death?"

"Nothing, sir. There's only that bruise on the temple."

"Yes. We must leave it at that, I suppose."

But Morrison did not like it. It had been within the bounds of possibility to fasten the crime onto a mad scientist. He had satisfied himself that the experiments the professor was making were done without Julia's consent, even without his discussion of them with her — unless she were the most consummate actress. Whenever he was tempted to believe that she was posing, there rose before his eyes the

picture of her tearful face as she stooped so commiseratingly over the dead Nelly in her basket. Everything, her care for the animal, for himself, for her father, pointed to a tender heart; her coldness to the professor showed how deeply he had hurt her over the death of a mere animal. Outrageous to believe her acting a part; impossible to reconcile her behaviour with the deliberate cutting off of a human life! Her kindness, her thoughtfulness — no, it was incredible.

Yet he had to remember, as a factor in the case, that at least one of the victims had met his death on a lonely road which it was the girl's habit to frequent. Did the old fellow frequent it too? He could not recall one occasion on which he had left the house during his occupancy of it.

"You should take a walk by the sea, professor," he said one day, in real concern for the old fellow's pallid looks, and in an endeavour to kill two birds with one stone and put his suspicions to the test. "You are working far too hard."

"The sea?" The old fellow looked as bewildered as if it was the first time he had ever heard of the sea. "Oh no, I never go out. I haven't been away from the house for years. I am far too much occupied with my work. I have no interests outside it."

"But you accompany your daughter sometimes — when she goes abroad, for instance?"

"Dear me, no. Julia has left me once or twice for a short time — I never go away myself. Mrs. Barrett looks after me during her absence."

There was no mistaking the guilelessness of the old man's reply. Morrison puffed at his cigarette in silence. Had Julia deliberately lied to him when she said, in Cologne, that she was with her father? Her words, he remembered them distinctly, were — "I live with my father. We are very poor. He thinks I am working at a dressmaker's." True, she had not said in so many words that her father was actually there on the spot, but he had got that impression . . . she had deliberately given him that impression. All his old suspicions were awake again.

She was nothing but a common criminal after all, and he was merely being duped through the lure of her beauty and her personality into some trap. He suddenly felt weary and discouraged, and very, very bitter. He wanted to get away from this damp and mist-infested hole, out into the air of day, somewhere where he could have an honest drink and a pipe, with Jackson, or the Chief, or somebody hardheaded like that; somewhere and with some one sane and hearty, and untroubled by these stealthy undercurrents of intrigue and deceit that seemed

rampant in the very air of this dank, dark mystery house of the Cornish cliff.

When Julia brought the lamp in, and placed it on his little table so that he could see comfortably to read, it seemed an outrage that her eyes should be so frank and pellucid, so innocent, and so beautiful. It was the old, old story of a lovely exterior hiding all manner of iniquities beneath it, he thought bitterly, and he jibed at himself for ever having believed her lovable and good. How easily fooled he had been!

Then once again he railed at his ingratitude in believing anything wrong of that girl who had shown nothing but the utmost kindness to him, a mere stranger and at most an unwelcome one. A moment later he cursed himself for being a weak and gullible fool, and finally resolved to curb his own inclinations at any cost and to use all the available methods for getting at the root of this absurdly complicated mystery.

He threw his cigarette in the hearth, determined to put his decision into practice forthwith.

" Miss Price, I've just been telling the professor he ought to take more air and exercise. He's looking a little off colour, don't you think?"

" And I've been assuring Mr. Gascoigne that I never go out and have not been away from the house

for years, Julia. You see," the old man turned with a polite smile to his guest as one who begs diffidently to disagree with an opinion, " how well I have kept in spite of my sedentary life. It suits me; I am used to it. It would disturb my work, you see, to have to alter my habits." He threw an anxious glance at his daughter, as if appealing for a confirmation of this remark.

The detective deliberately directed his mind to concentrate upon Julia's answer to the question he silently enforced upon her.

The girl replied almost mechanically: " Yes, that's quite true — father never goes beyond the garden. I wish he would, it would do him good to have a change. But you are not feeling ill, father?"

" No, no, Julia. It is just a kindly fancy on Mr. Gascoigne's part. It is not tea-time yet, my dear? I will just finish something I was doing and return in ten minutes," and he wandered off again followed by his daughter.

Morrison could not determine whether the fleeting glance she threw back at him out of those wonderful grey eyes of hers was an apprehensive one, or whether he was merely allowing his imagination to run riot. But the time for speculation about the whole affair was fast slipping by, and the need for drastic action was upon him. He moved restlessly

on his couch: it irked him to remain quiescent, and presently he stood up and hobbled about the room. The foot was certainly much better, though the swelling had not yet gone: it was mere futile dabbling to make it the excuse for further idleness. Nevertheless, he hadn't meant Julia to surprise him up and off the sofa to which she had relegated him.

"Ought you to be using that foot?" she asked him doubtfully, setting down a plate of the bread and butter she had been cutting in the kitchen. "Is it wise yet?"

"I think so, thanks to your splendid nursing, Miss Julia," Morrison answered gratefully. "I'm afraid the time is fast approaching when my conscience won't let me trespass on your kindness any longer. I shall have to be making tracks. This jolly old foot ought to be convalescent to-morrow."

"Convalescent, but hardly fit for normal duties," she returned with a smile. "Take this stick — I don't think you should try it too far for several days more yet. In any case, how are you going to get back?"

"There won't be much difficulty about that, I'm afraid. I suppose I could get a car from Truro."

"It costs a lot," she reflected.

He had forgotten for a moment that he was a

commercial traveller and not overburdened with the good things of the world.

"I'll get the firm to stand that. Or perhaps there's a local conveyance? There's no lack of trains if one could get to the station. You have at least one more than the time-table mentions, haven't you?" he added. "Do have a smoke?"

The tips of their fingers met for the fraction of a second as he held the match to light her cigarette. In the fraction of a second, too, her eyelids flickered upward to meet his look, then lowered themselves again.

"What do you mean?" she asked in a constrained whisper. "Not ——"

"Surely you don't believe in that story too?" His voice was gently derisive. "I mean the ghost train, of course. Some old legend that's stuck to the place, encouraged by the natural superstition of the natives? Why, Miss Julia!"

She had gone very white.

"Superstition! It isn't superstition — it's true!" she whispered horrified. "Oh, why do you speak of it? Why will no one let me forget it?"

Morrison watched her narrowly under cover of half-closed eyes and the cigarette smoke. At least she was not acting now — there was no mistaking

the sincerity of the terror his talk of the phantom train had immediately awakened in her; she was white to the lips, and the cigarette trembled in her fingers. And, hating himself for torturing her, Morrison hardened his heart to deliberately turn the knife in the wound.

"What makes you believe in it? Why should you let it frighten you like that?" he urged.

Julia dropped on the sofa and beat the cushions with her hand, futilely, staring straight in front of her.

"Because ——" he scarcely heard her whisper, and bent over her to catch the words —"because *I've seen it!*"

The detective limped across the room, dropped his stick and seated himself beside her, seizing her little hand between both his own.

"Now listen, Julia. Trains don't run of their own accord. They have to be stoked with coal, to be kept oiled, some one has to pull little switches to make 'em go and other little switches to make 'em stop. Do you really believe the whole outfit, engine-driver and all, to be a *ghost?* Come, that isn't reasonable."

"It has nothing to do with reason! I tell you I've *seen* it — heard it — shrieking, crashing, the brake grinding — the headlights flashing — I've

seen it with my own eyes, and *no train has ever run on this line* after seven o'clock. It's true, it's true!" She clutched at his arm. "Don't go near it — keep away — this place is haunted." She looked round, her eyes staring wide in fear. "Oh, I'm frightened, I'm frightened, always ——"

He put his arms about her, every nerve in him wanting to protect her, to make her forget, to comfort her and soothe her — and yet he went on.

"But doesn't the legend say that whoever sees the darn thing dies? Come Julia, it didn't kill *you*, did it?"

"Very nearly, very nearly! I almost died, I've never been the same since. Don't speak of it any more, I beg you. I try to forget it. I can't bear to speak of it any more, please!"

She was so evidently on the verge of an hysterical breakdown that Morrison forebore to question her further. He saw it would be useless until she was calmer. They sat in silence for a few minutes, while she struggled to regain her self-control.

"Promise me you won't talk of it again," she besought him. "It makes me so ill even to think of it. I am not very strong; you see I am not."

He patted her hand. "No, no, I won't speak of it, of course, if you don't want to."

She stood up. "Please get back on your sofa

and rest your foot to-day, if you really mean to begin using it in earnest."

He noticed that she had accepted his dictum and no longer tried to dissuade him from his plan to leave on the morrow, and wondered if the mention of the phantom train had anything to do with that. In any case, the conversation had given him fresh food for thought. It was one thing to hear rumours of a ghostly visitation among a crowd of gullible villagers and quite another to be in communication with one who had actually *seen* the phantom that, whatever it was, had obviously made the deepest kind of impression on the girl. It had created in her a sense of terror that haunted her whole life, that accounted in some measure, perhaps entirely, for the frightened look in her eyes.

But it did not account for the remarkable fact that she remained in the neighbourhood of the thing that caused her so much agony of mind. Why did she not leave the place? What was there to prevent her and her old father from cutting adrift from that ship of despair?

# CHAPTER XV

THE house in the hollow of the old quarry was quiet again. The lamp was out, but the oil-stove still burned, throwing queer shadows into the corners of the room. The wind soughed gently and every now and then sent a twig or two of the tree outside the window tapping against the house.

Morrison did not sleep on his couch. He was waiting till he felt sure the girl and the old professor were deep in slumber before he got up. He had work to do. He was leaving the house to-morrow — perhaps never to enter it again — and there was much to learn yet. He might have lost more than a fortnight of valuable work by that unfortunate spraining of his ankle, on the other hand the passing of time was sometimes necessary in the working out of queer things, and there was seldom any use in forcing the issue. Waiting played an important part in the game. On the whole, he was inclined to hope those weeks were not badly spent, impatiently as he had been wanting to get into harness again. For he had now two main objects — the discovery of Heath's murderer and the probing of that ghost train mystery — these two were, in his opinion,

one — and the clearing of Julia's character in his own eyes and the world's. Not that the world mattered much if he could only be convinced in his own mind of her innocence. That mattered, most enormously.

By his wrist-watch and the glow of the stove he saw that it was nearly half-past twelve. Long ago, the two other occupants of the house would, he trusted, have been wrapped in slumber; but he wanted to leave nothing to chance. Shifting himself off the couch presently, he groped for and found the professor's walking-stick with which Julia had provided him and, carrying a candle, and pausing step by step to listen, made his way to the door and opened it softly.

To his right stretched the corridor, ending in the stairs leading to the Silvertons' apartments above, and interrupted by the three doors which led respectively to a small apartment used as a dressing-bathroom, and the two bedrooms — Julia's and Professor Price's. To his left, the corridor ended in the front door of the house with, at right angles to it on the other side of the passage, the hollow of blackness that was obviously the entrance to the lower regions — and the underground chamber through whose grilled window he had seen the old man bending over the table.

There was a hat-and-coat-rack near the front door. He groped his way along, fearing to use the walking-stick on the bare boards, found his mackintosh and drew his electric torch and — from force of habit — a box of matches from the pocket; then, on second thought, he slipped the coat over his dressing-gown. It was cold. Extinguishing the light he carried, he placed the candle-stick on the hall-stand and bent his footsteps towards that hollow that loomed so blackly ahead.

It led, he found when he reached it, through the open door to a flight of stone steps that went steeply down. He remembered hearing the old man's shuffling footsteps descending those stone stairs on the day he had first sought entrance to the mysterious house hid in the valley.

Even with his careful going, it seemed to him now, that his own footsteps echoed as hollowly, and that the faint noises he could not avoid making, hampered as he was by that burdensome foot of his, must awaken the sleepers in their rooms above.

But he managed the descent without mishap, and in a few minutes found himself in the cellar-like room he had set out to investigate.

It was an eerie place indeed, that chamber. Morrison stared round him in astonishment, flashing the feeble beam of his torch in all directions.

A large room, stone-flagged: the ceiling beams blackened and hung with cobwebs, the whitewashed walls patched and peeling here and there with great splotches of damp. And cold as a tomb. He was glad he had donned his coat.

On the floor at intervals round the walls were ranged a number of curious-shaped boxes that, at his first amazed glance, Morrison took to be large coffins. They revealed themselves, indeed, on closer inspection, to be nothing else. Egyptian mummy-cases, the lids firmly in their places, hiding who knew what of the sinister, perhaps the very bodies of long dead men!

From one such, doubtless the old fellow had received the seeds from which he had planted the patch of oat-field in the garden — from another, the phial of poison on which he had based those gruesome experiments resulting in the death of Julia's little dog, Nelly Bligh, perhaps in the murder of Heath ——

He stood for a few moments in horrid fascination at the Professor's queer playthings, then directed the feeble rays of his torch to the rest of the cellar's contents. On shelves that ran about the walls reposed some of those beautiful little statuettes the old man had exhibited with such pride; on a bench in a corner were rough copies of them

among lumps of white modelling clay, while upon the table in the middle of the room, the table over which he had seen the professor stooping, rested a number of glass vessels, small scales, retorts, china slabs, tools and such like objects used in the analyst's studies.

The professor's workshop, strangely sinister though its contents were, seemed to be particularly well equipped; but for what purpose, as Morrison asked himself again, if for any beyond the gratification of a harmless passion for discovery?

The small circle of light cast by the torch reminded him that through the barred window a close observer might see what went on in that room. Not that there seemed any likelihood of nocturnal visitors; but he stripped off the mackintosh at the thought, and reaching up, draped it across the window as high as he could, hanging it on a couple of convenient nails at each side. The action revealed a somewhat curious thing.

The inside sill, he now noticed, was made of solid wood that sloped downwards from the framework at an angle of roughly forty-five degrees, and the surface of it was scarred and ground in vertical lines as though some heavy weights had been drawn across it. Some of the scars were old, some new and showing up whitely on the grimed surface.

The detective examined them carefully. Then, sending the beam of his torch downwards, he turned his attention to the stone-flagged floor. It was swept clean, but here and there in the interstices of the slabs, were small fragments of straw, such as might have fallen from material used in packing.

There was nothing specially strange about that. The cellar window might be used as a convenient entrance for goods, even, perhaps, for the food stores which, presumably, being so far from any town, might be ordered to be sent by train or car in fairly large quantities at infrequent intervals. Still, those scars on the window ledge would indicate the passage of stores of a distinctly massive nature, he reflected. Perhaps the mummy-cases were recent acquisitions?

He limped across to them and kneeling on the cold stones, closely examined the edges where they rested on the floor. There was sufficient accumulation of dust and dirt, more or less adhesive with time, to show that they had been in that position for a considerable period. He tried to shove one a little aside. It was extraordinarily heavy; even for his respectably muscular arms, absolutely immoveable. That was somewhat puzzling, because these inner wooden shells of old Egyptian notabilities as a rule were not constructed in very strong fashion.

He attempted to lift the painted lids. Two were fastened securely. The third and largest of the half dozen or so cases that edged the walls gave to his endeavours. He pushed it a few inches aside.

Peering down into the gap, to his excited curiosity it seemed for a moment that he was looking at the pale winding sheet perhaps of some long dead princeling. He touched the yellowish white covering, whatever it was, rather gingerly, and withdrew his finger quickly. It was cold, cold and clammy as death itself, and for a second the eeriness of the whole proceeding seized on Teddie's imagination. He felt actually frightened and goose-fleshy. Then he recovered his sangfroid with an inward smile. Detectives, specially those wonderfully unhuman machines one read of in mystery novels (the nearest approach to the real thing the majority of the world ever got to, after all), had no nerves! Thrusting his hand in again beneath the hollow lid, Morrison discovered the coffin to be filled with clay.

He sat back on his heels and considered, frowning. He would have given anything for a smoke at that moment, but even if he could have risked it, he had no tobacco or cigarettes in his dressing-gown pocket, only the matches he had transferred from his overcoat. Clay! Clay in an ancient Egyptian

mummy-case! He muttered under his breath a favourite expression of poor young Heath's that came irrelevantly to his mind, "Little apples!"

Now what the deuce was common or garden clay doing in a gruesome receptacle of that sort? The chances were it hid something valuable — what did it hide? The powdering bones of a two-thousand-year-old monarch, or ——?

Seized with renewed energy, Morrison leant over the coffin and tried to penetrate the secret. But the top clay had caked into very nearly a hard crust and resisted all efforts to break it with his hands. He dug at it with the butt of his torch, dug feverishly till the mass broke, then plunged in his hands again, threw the torch on the floor, thrust deeper with both hands till he was up to the elbows in soft yellowish earth; and then he felt something beneath, something hard and cold — something long, heavy, cylindrical ——

He drew out his arms again covered with sticky clay, felt desperately for and found the torch again, pressed the end. There was no response — the battery had given way or he had broken the bulb in his reckless digging. Morrison uttered a smothered "Damn!" and felt for the matches in his pocket. But his luck was gone. The box was nearly empty.

By the light of the only remaining three it con-

tained, he managed to strike. He saw enough to make his heart beat faster!

In the uncanny blackness of the underground chamber, he dragged himself upright and stood stock-still and stunned while the significance of the thing developed itself upon his consciousness, outlining dimly, as it were, a map-plan upon the dark. Piece by piece it resolved itself before him, hesitatingly, gropingly, vaguely, then clearer and clearer, till all seemed plain as day.

. . . . . .

Minutes later, his mind engrossed with the discovery to the exclusion of all else, he felt his way back stumblingly to the door, dragged himself up the stone stairs, and reached his room.

It was not till many hours of that sleepless night had passed that he remembered he had left his mackintosh hanging over the window. He resolved to creep down and get it with the first streak of dawn that crept through the curtained windows; then forgot it in the flying snatches of thought that raced through his elated brain.

He had reached something positive at last, something big; perhaps the biggest thing the Yard had been at work on for many a long day; and it would be Morrison who would pull it off, and not Barlow!

No one was in on it but himself. His mind leaped beyond the stretch of doubtless delicate work that lay ahead before the end was reached, to the conclusion of the matter; visualised the Chief's congratulations, even the headlines in the papers — why, that Cologne episode would be nothing to it!

And then he brought himself and his boyishly excited imaginings to a standstill by one thought that sent a chilly feeling through his marrow.

Julia.

# CHAPTER XVI

It was late when Teddie Morrison woke that morning, and she was standing by his bedside with his breakfast on a tray and telling him that it was nearly half-past nine.

"You were sleeping so soundly that I hadn't the heart to wake you before," she said with her sweet smile. Then, lifting the cover from an appetising dish of bacon and eggs, she added mischievously, "Do you know, I have always wondered if you slept in those dark glasses. This is the first time I have ever seen you without them."

He grinned, reached for the spectacles from the table by his side and put them on. But it seemed an unnecessary action. The time could not be far distant now when they would both have to come out in their true colours.

"'Now we see as through a glass darkly,'" he quoted. "I hope I shall soon be able to discard them. I think," he added significantly, "it will not be long."

Julia, who was always quick to perceive hidden meanings, regarded him with a little puzzled frown; then another thought entered her mind and she left

the subject of Morrison's glasses to say a little worriedly:

"I have two patients this morning. Father isn't a bit well, so I insisted on his staying in bed to breakfast."

"I'm sorry to hear that," Morrison answered sympathetically. "He hasn't seemed quite himself for a few days now."

"No, not since Nelly died."

Despite his sympathy for any trouble of Julia's (and her grey eyes this morning held an added shadow of anxiety) Morrison felt a temporary sense of relief at the thought that the old fellow hadn't entered his workshop yet to-day. The mackintosh was still hanging over the grated window, glaring evidence of his violation of the professor's sanctum, evidence enough to give the whole game away. When Julia found out that she had been for weeks harbouring a spy (and not only sheltering him but attending with such unwearying tenderness to his physical needs as a sick man), and that the only reward she was to get was his betrayal of her and her old father, what would her feelings towards him be?

He was tempted to a confession of the whole matter. That course, however, was an impossible one now. Much, very much of grave import was

involved. His personal inclinations must be more rigorously repressed than ever. He must keep a tight hand on himself and get away from Julia's presence as quickly as possible, for he knew safety lay only in flight if his worst fears were realised.

Yet, looking at her for the thousandth time, with her innocent, almost childlike mien, her frank yet anxious eyes, he asked himself the same old questions. He couldn't, wouldn't believe it. And then again, was it possible that she could be in that house for weeks, months, years, and not be a party to the menacing events of which it was the centre-point? Possible, yes; but hardly probable, hardly credible.

That queer little remark, now, about his spectacles. Her reference to Cologne, and losing her hat. Almost as if she challenged him. The lie — if it was one?— about her father.

He hated himself for his suspicions, but the doubts would still lurk in the corners of his mind. Not that it made any difference to his actual regard for her. That was one thing that stood above and apart from all the rest: whatever she was, whatever she did, he would still love her, she would still remain the one woman he had ever desired to make his own.

There remained, of course, the question of Julia's own feelings on the matter. In the watches

of the night and in the long hours spent in enforced idleness on his sofa with that blessed sprained foot bound in Julia's cold compresses, he had often contemplated it — sometimes it had seemed to him that she wanted to keep him there as long as possible. But while she had been kindness itself, she had given him no reason to suppose that she returned his love, none whatever; and now he felt he would give anything he possessed to learn whether he had the faintest chance. A sudden idea crossed his mind.

"Miss Julia," putting down his empty cup, "I'm going to get up; clothed and in my right mind and I shall once more burst upon an astonished world — with my little bag of samples. Will you do something for me?"

"Anything."

"Anything?"

"Anything in reason," Julia amended the promise.

"Will you go down to your father's workroom and bring me my raincoat?"

"But your raincoat is hanging in the hall," she told him without a trace of surprise.

"No, it isn't. I left it downstairs last night. As a matter of fact I wanted to see how this confounded foot worked, so I gave it a trial last night

after you'd gone to bed. Wandered downstairs in my coat and left it behind. Do you mind?"

"Not in the least; but why didn't you ask me to help you yesterday, instead of getting up in the middle of the night?"

"Well, I had an idea I wanted to give this foot a chance of showing what it could do, unaided."

"You are very independent," she returned with a provoking little smile, and went off.

There had been not the slightest sign of trepidation about her when he made his request: she had shown no surprise or agitation at the thought of his being alone in the old scientist's cellar, and Morrison understood her well enough now to know that any feeling she experienced was immediately reflected in her expressive, mobile features and in those tell-tale eyes of hers. But when she found the mackintosh hanging on the window, with the blatant intention of shielding his doings from the possibility of seeking eyes, her suspicions would certainly be awakened. She would realise that he suspected something strange in the house. She would be on her guard.

His own motives in sending her on that errand had been quite clearly defined in his mind. He desired urgently, on this their last day together, to set his mind at rest over her own part in the sinister

proceedings; and he was in the mood to run a certain amount of risk in finding that out.

He passed a few extremely tense moments until she came back with the coat over her arm. She was perfectly calm — it was evident that the little mission had been the most ordinary one in the world to her.

"You left it in a heap on the floor by the window," she said in pretended rebuke. "I nearly fell over it."

Morrison murmured his thanks. By luck — or was it misfortune, since it deprived him of the test he had aimed at making?— the wretched mackintosh had fallen from its nails to the ground. Still, she knew he had been in that underground room; and the fact had not, apparently, perturbed her, which in itself, under the circumstances, seemed to him to dissociate her from a partnership in guilt.

But yet, he regretted that the test had not been a complete one. Now, short of laying his cards on the table, there seemed no way of getting at the truth; and with the light that the knowledge he had had in his possession since the previous night shed on things, it seemed more than ever urgent that he should know it.

"Your clothes are in the first long drawer of the

dressing-chest in the bathroom," said Julia, " but I don't think you can get your boot on yet, can you? There's still a little swelling, you see."

When she had gone again, Morrison drew out his torch from under the sofa where he had placed it on his return from the cellar, thrust it into the pocket of his mackintosh and carried it into the bathroom. Part of the yellowish clay still adhered to it. He cleansed it, ascertaining that the battery had run out. At first he was perturbed: but on reflection, as he splashed in his tub, he determined that it was of no import. There was no use in pursuing the investigation further. He had discovered as much as he or any one else wanted to discover in that house — the rest, he argued, must be done from the outside, and the sooner he got away and into touch with Jackson and the Chief, the better. He had it all at his fingers' ends now.

Dressed for the first time for weeks in normal attire, but still retaining the old man's bedroom slippers, for his ankle hurt when he tried on his boot, Morrison hobbled along the corridor to the front door. He felt the convalescent's desire to see the trees and the sky and breathe in the fresh air of the out-of-doors. In a few minutes he found Julia standing at his elbow.

"You asked me just now to do something for you," she began. "Now it's my turn. Will you do something for me?"

"Anything," said Morrison smiling as he remembered her own words of a little earlier.

"Anything?" She smiled too.

"Anything. You see, *I* make no reservations. There's nothing I wouldn't do for you, Julia," he added, with a grave sincerity.

Julia evaded his eyes.

"I am worried about father. He seems quite ill and I am going to telephone for the doctor."

"I am sorry — you have a telephone here, then?" he asked guardedly.

"Upstairs, in Mr. Silverton's room."

"I hope your father isn't really ill. Could you at the same time 'phone to the Black Sheep for a car to come and fetch me? But tell me what it is I can do for you?"

"I wondered," she said diffidently, "if you would mind staying till to-morrow — or until the doctor comes. Father seems so queer that I hardly like to be left alone."

Anxious as he was to be getting on with the job in hand. Morrison replied without hesitation.

"Of course I'll stay, if I can be of any use to you."

"Thank you," she said gratefully. "Now I'll go and telephone."

He followed her thoughtfully back to the sitting-room door, and watched her slight figure running up the uncarpeted stairs.

For his life, he could not help the uncomfortable suspicion that this was some new move in the game to keep him a prisoner still.

# CHAPTER XVII

THOSE hours of waiting till the doctor's arrival were very irksome ones to Morrison. He was eager and anxious to pursue his investigations in the light of his discovery — he wanted to get right down to it; but he had promised Julia to stand by until at least the verdict on the old man's condition was known to her, and the doctor's assistant had telephoned that he was away on a case and would not return till the late afternoon.

The house in the valley, meantime, took on that hush of still expectancy common to the shadow of sickness. Julia remained with her father most of the morning. Mrs. Barrett, the woman from the shop on the sea front, who came every day to clean and cook, seemed to be busy overhead judging by the faint noises he heard every now and then.

He was rather looking forward to seeing the two men who occupied those rooms overhead, in view of all things. What bearing they had on the mystery he was on the point of fathoming, must now soon be revealed. He entertained some lively speculations about them; but, on reflection, he was of the opinion that he had best perform the duty of a good scout,

which was to see and not be seen by them. In other words, he decided that it would be well for him to have quitted the house before they came back.

Mrs. Barrett, herself, was a bit of a mystery; she seemed to keep strange hours. Sometimes she came early in the morning, sometimes at mid-day, sometimes in the afternoon. And she had never allowed him the chance of a single moment's private conversation with her during those weeks when he had been confined to the couch in the sitting-room. Listening to the blurred noises of carpet-brushing and furniture moving overhead, he pondered about Mrs. Barrett.

It was twenty minutes to four on that lowering winter's afternoon when Julia came cloaked and hooded into the room.

"I am going to the end of the drive to meet the doctor," she told him. There was no mistaking her anxiety; her manner gave him the impression of a nervous desperation that insisted on some sort of action. "He may not find his way in the dark. Would you, I wonder, listen, in case my father should call? He's asleep now, but I shouldn't like him to wake and want something and find no one there to attend to him — and Mrs. Barrett is so busy. I left the door ajar."

"Certainly I will. Mrs. Barrett is preparing for

Mr. Silverton's return?" It was a long shot, but it found a mark. Julia bit her lip before she replied with obvious reluctance.

"Yes. We heard this morning they will be coming soon. I don't know quite when."

She turned at the door, threw him a lingering look as though she would say something that a stronger force than herself kept her from uttering, then disappeared without another word.

It was not more than a minute or so after she had gone, and while Teddie was still cogitating on the meaning of that look of hers, that he heard a low muttering sound coming from the old man's room. Teddie limped along the passage and pushed open the door.

The professor was not asleep and talking in delirium as he had half feared. Instead, he was reclining on his elbow in the bed, his face and hair not less white than the pillow, and writing something in a little note-book with a frail and shaking hand. Teddie heard the words he slowly uttered, weak though they were, as he wrote them down laboriously.

"At three, the sense of lassitude more extreme — at three-fifteen, in a bath of perspiration — at three-twenty, the slight paralysis of the lower limbs begins — no pain ——"

He broke off, seeing Morrison standing at the foot of his bed, and stared at him for a few seconds with his burning eyes. Then he thrust the diary with feeble haste out of sight beneath his pillow and sank back on it with an exhausted sigh, closing his eyes.

"Can I do anything for you, sir?" Morrison bent over him to ask. The old man paid no heed. Either he slept or had lost consciousness, or he was assuming one or the other; and after a few moments' indecisive watching, Morrison tiptoed out again.

He was shocked beyond measure by those words the scientist had uttered. Tragedy seemed to be closing down on the house in the hollow. He went and stood outside the front door to breathe in the sane air of the outer world, even though it was dank and laden with mists from the Cornish sea, and to ponder over the flame of fanaticism that could cause a man to undergo torments, even the sacrifice of life itself, in the interests of science. And presently he saw the headlights of the doctor's car as it made its slow way down the overgrown drive, and then it drew up at the door and Julia and the doctor descended and hurried past, scarcely noticing him, into the house.

Not five minutes later the detective heard a

slight crackling among the dry branches of the trees, and Jackson cautiously emerged.

"You gave me a fright till I recognised you, sir," he grinned. "Glad to see you up and about, though. I got a lift along the road in that doctor's car and I was afraid it was you he was coming to see."

"No, I'm as fit as a fiddle — it's the old man — Jackson, I've never been so pleased to see any one in my life. We're on the track of a big plot, my boy. Last night I found the clue to the whole thing. There's no mistaking it — but I can't tell you now, we may be interrupted at any moment."

Jackson's eyes goggled in sheer anticipation, but, like a good assistant, he asked no questions but waited for what information was to be dealt out to him. Captain Morrison, however, was wasting no words on explanations. He had his orders to give and gave them crisply. But first he asked a somewhat irrelevant question.

"What's the date, Jackson?"

"The date, sir? Twenty-eighth, I think. I'll soon see ——" He drew a newspaper from his pocket and screwed up his eyes in an endeavour to read in the failing light. "Yes, twenty-eighth. And by the way, there's something about that ghost train here in the paper, a funny paragraph ——"

"Give it to me — that'll wait till presently." Morrison stuffed the sheet into his pocket. "Now, Jackson, I want half a dozen men posted out of sight but within hail of the station platform here for the next few nights. I want the jetty kept under strict observation — and I want this place surrounded. If you've got an odd man or two you may as well keep 'em somewhere around the quarries on the cliff road. Got all that? To-night — no delay. It may not come off for a day or two, but we're leaving nothing to chance."

"Understood, sir."

"Good man."

"What about the tunnel, sir?"

"I'll attend to that," the detective replied after a second's consideration. "You keep the salient points covered. And — by the way, Jackson ——"

"Sir?"

"I may or may not have another chance of talking to you. If it comes to a scrap — it might, to-night, or to-morrow, or the next day — I want you to have Miss Price and her father under your own personal supervision, and to see that they are incommoded in no way, until you get word from me. That clear?"

"Clear as day; you seem pretty confident about all this, sir."

"I'm putting all my money on it, Jackson, against rather long odds. As you suggest (yes, you did, you old blackguard, don't deny it), there's a chance of the horse being scratched. If it is, if we're on the wrong scent, then I'm completely finished and Barlow is welcome to buzz along and pick up the jolly old trail again. By the way, he hasn't done much over that Cologne business, has he?"

Jackson chuckled slyly. "Not he, sir. That little lot's still at large. It wouldn't surprise me if you and me came into the running again. If we get on top of this, the Chief'll certainly want to put you on to clear Mr. Barlow's messes, sir."

"Looking a bit ahead, aren't you, old bean? We're not out of this wood yet by quite a long chalk. Now, if my calculations are correct, we may expect something lively within the next few days — nights, I mean."

"Nights, sir?"

"Yes, nights, Jackson."

"You mean, sir —— ?"

"I mean that we're going to get to the bottom of this phantom train business, at last, Jackson. This is the twenty-eighth of November, I think you said; I've lost track of dates here."

"That's right, sir."

"Mr. Heath died—was killed—on the twenty-ninth of the month, Jackson."

"Ah! That newspaper paragraph'll interest you, sir." Jackson's tone was dry.

"I daresay, but we've no more time. Got all those instructions straight now?"

"Right, sir."

"Then toddle off back — quick. I hear them coming."

A slight rustling of branches betokened Jackson's departure through the trees and the next moment Julia and the doctor came down the corridor from the professor's bedroom and stood in the hallway near the door talking in low tones. Morrison limped into them with the detached air of a man who has been admiring the scenery, but neither heeded him.

"It's an extraordinary thing, extraordinary," the doctor was saying in a puzzled way. "All the symptoms point to poisoning. I'll send him some medicine the first thing to-morrow, Miss Price. There's no actual danger, I think, but his temperature is below normal and we *must* get his strength up. That's the chief trouble as far as I can see. Follow those directions and let him have another dose of that sleeping draught to-night. He should be better in the morning; I'll call again then."

"Poisoning!" Julia's face was very white as she repeated the word under her breath. "It can't be — *poisoning!*" And she stood with her hands clasped tightly together, with unseeing eyes, and never noticed the doctor's "goodbye" as he got into his car and was driven away into the dusk. Scarcely did she notice Morrison, when he drew her arm gently through his own, and led her back to the sitting-room with what soothing words he could find to say.

## CHAPTER XVIII

"POISON!" the girl repeated, as she sank limply on to Morrison's couch. "Does that mean ——"

Morrison nodded.

"I'm afraid so, Miss Julia — I'm afraid it means that, failing other subjects, your father has used himself as the victim of his experiments with that Egyptian drug. You know, whichever way you look at it, that's a pretty fine thing to do. He might easily have chosen me, for instance, instead. No one would have been the wiser," he added, in a vain endeavour to turn her thoughts into lighter channels.

"Oh, no! Father would never have done that. Why, that might have meant — murder!"

"Well, this fresh experiment might have meant suicide. He was willing to sacrifice his life if necessary."

"That's different. Father is so gentle, he would not willingly hurt ——" She stopped and sighed heavily. He guessed she was thinking of Nelly Bligh, her little dog that had died under the professor's experiments with that very poison.

"When one gets obsessed by a great idea as this one is to the professor," Morrison explained, attempting to soften the hard fact of the old man's fanaticism, "one's normal character changes. I know your father is kindness itself in every other matter but this one. He feels he has a mission."

"If only they hadn't encouraged him so! If only ——" she looked at Morrison with apprehensive eyes.

Once again she had been on the verge of a confession, or of an explanation which she had no right to make, which something had urged her to withhold.

He pressed her hand in both his. "Julia," he said earnestly, "listen. To-morrow I am going away, and we may never meet again. I may have no further chance of doing anything to help you; and I know you need help. Now tell me. Why have you wanted me to stay here?"

"Have you stayed against your will?"

The answer was a procrastination, and Teddie, at that moment, was determined to brook no deviations from the course he meant to pursue. If necessary, he must use the force of his will; and suddenly he made up his mind to do it, against his own inclinations, but fired with the urgent necessity for getting a step further in this strange matter. Con-

centrating his whole thought on extracting from her an answer to his question:

"Tell me," he repeated, fixing her eyes with his own, and exerting all the power he possessed to bring the girl under his will.

"I — I ——"

She seemed to be struggling against it. Then, quite suddenly she gave up.

"I wanted you to help me — I felt I could trust you, and I needed help, so badly," she replied faintly.

"Help — against what?" He gripped her hand tighter.

"Against — *them*. The Silvertons. They make me — do things I do not want to do. I am not my own! They — they hypnotise me. Oh, I know it, when they are not here; I fight against it then, but when they come back I am weak and powerless again. I have to do what they want me to do." Her voice had sunk to a whisper and he had to bend low to catch the words she uttered.

"How did you think I could help you against them?" he urged.

"Something told me you could destroy this horror that is menacing us. Oh, I do not know what it is! I know that everything here is cruel and wrong, and that my father is in their power ——"

Her voice was growing weaker and weaker, her dark lashes drooped on her pale cheeks.

And Morrison, afraid that she was about to faint under the influence of the suggestion he was exercising over her, and already ashamed of his deliberate attempt to obtain information she would not have given under ordinary circumstances, loosened the tension of his thoughts and his grip upon her hand. But before he let it go, he stooped his head and kissed it. He felt an intense relief that needed some means of expression at her unconscious words.

"God bless you, Julia," he murmured; and he added to himself, "And damn those villains!"

She raised her head and looked at him with the dazed expression he had seen before in her eyes, as though she had suddenly waked out of sleep in strange surroundings.

"I had better go and see if my father is all right," she said uncertainly. "I haven't been talking nonsense, have I?" she added eagerly.

"No, Julia, you've been talking the most wonderful good sense. Come back again, soon."

He smiled so reassuringly up at her that in spite of herself she answered it with a smile of her own, albeit a pale and transient one.

She flitted away looking like a grey moth in her

cloak, and Morrison lighted a cigarette and smoked vigorously till she returned a few minutes later.

The information she had given him was of the utmost value to his own piece of mind: it lightened his anxieties to an amazing degree, raised the cloud under which he had been oppressed for many a day. Julia was innocent, he now felt certain, sinned against but not sinning; and he reproached himself again and again for ever having entertained doubts of her.

Just for what purpose those two brothers, who occupied the luxurious upstairs flat, kept the girl and her old father there, it was now imperative he should discover. Their reason for occupying that remotely buried house was a secret he thought he already knew, if his guesses in conjunction with the information he had obtained were to be relied upon, though to nobody, not even to Jackson, scarcely to himself, would he for the moment disclose them. They were his and his alone till time and events proved him right or wrong.

"Never tell your dream," was a favourite quotation of the Chief's that flashed through his mind now. "Not even to yourself."

"He's fallen asleep," Julia told him when she came back. "Mrs. Barrett says she can't stop

to-night — the tide's low now, so I told her to go."

"The tide?"

"She lives down by the jetty, and walks along the shore, and through the smugglers' tunnel," Julia explained.

"Ah!" The mystery of the varying hours Julia's charwoman kept at the house was explained. Silly that he had never thought of it. "So one can walk right along the shore?"

"In that direction, yes, at low tide. The rocks stop one the other way. Can you stay with me, do you think?"

"I'll stay, of course, Julia." But there was just a fleeting second when he wondered why Mrs. Barrett could not have stayed under the peculiar circumstances.

After a pause Morrison asked quietly: "Will you tell me what you meant when you said those Silvertons made you do things against your will?"

"I didn't say that! No, no! I couldn't ——" She stared at him out of scared eyes, and shrank away. "I didn't mean to say that."

"Perhaps I was mistaken." He did not pursue the point, seeing her distress, but questioned instead, "When you said you wished they had not encouraged your father in his experiments, what did you mean then? Why do you stay here if they

frighten you? Must you? You are not happy here, are you?"

"Happy!" She laughed a mirthless laugh. "I've never been happy since we came to live here. Do I look happy?"

"You look frightened," he said tenderly. "Like a frightened dove, Julia. That's what I thought when I first saw you."

"That's just what I am. Frightened to death!"

"Can't you tell me about it? Would you rather not? I shall not press you, Julia, but mightn't it make things easier?"

Her eyes were rivetted on his for a long moment before she answered. She seemed to want to tell him something and to be debating inwardly as to whether she ought to take him into her confidence or not; and Morrison waited patiently until she made up her mind.

At length she spoke. "Very well, I will tell you."

"Come and sit here on the sofa beside me," he invited her. "Never mind the lamp. There, that's better. How cold your hands are!"

She was silent a moment, but she did not withdraw the cold little hands he chafed so gently between his own, as though she were a child he was tending.

"You will never let them know I told you? You promise?"

"I promise."

"It began a long time ago," she explained drearily. "I was only a child at school. My mother was alive then. My father has always dabbled in Egyptology — it was his hobby though he was an analyst by profession. He used to spend part of the year in Egypt, and I can always remember the beautiful little things he used to bring us when he came home. Statuettes, like those he has downstairs—and ushabtis, little glazed, doll-like models supposed to be the servants the Egyptians buried in their coffins with them to serve them till they lived again; and vases, and gold ornaments. Then he became associated with some people, scientists like himself, who were going to make a new sort of poison gas, and wanted to utilise his knowledge. I can't remember how it happened — I was at school — but afterwards, it seemed they accused him of having stolen the formula or something like that, and — he was put in prison. I am sure he was innocent — father couldn't steal! For years. Imagine it, my poor, gentle father in prison!"

"Wicked!"

"I know they used the formula which was my father's, themselves, and made a lot of money out

of it. Some government took it up and used it during the war. And I know that just before they put him away he discovered this vessel containing poison in one of the mummy-cases he had brought over. Then — he came out. He had lost all his money, all his friends turned away from him, and my mother had just died. He was wretched that he could not get back to his experiments — he did not feel the disgrace. We struggled along, living as best we could for months — I went out sewing. Then the Silvertons heard of him and asked him to come and discuss something they had in mind. They offered to provide for him and for me, and in return he would have to make models in clay for them. They gave him a workshop and told him he could work at his experiments as much as he liked."

"That pleased him, of course."

"Of course: I shall never forget his delight. We have been here ever since — that is five years ago. I might have earned a living elsewhere — but I could not leave him, he depends so much on me. You see how miserable he has been because I was angry over Nelly's death." She ceased speaking, and sat with folded hands idly gazing into the fire.

Morrison was profoundly affected by this recital of her troubles; but she had told him only

half the story, he knew. He was aiming at the mark that the making of those models was only a blind on the part of the Silverton brothers, and that they were using the old professor's knowledge as a bait for much bigger fish while trading on his obsession. Possibly she was unaware of that — he hoped she was: but she had repeated nothing of her statement about the strange power the Silvertons wielded over herself, and was seemingly unaware that she had given that secret away under hypnotic suggestion from himself.

"Yes?" he prompted her. "He was very unhappy because you were cross with him. But he, does he *want* to stay here?"

She smiled sadly. "Father is perfectly content," she said with a sigh, "and only too eager to be allowed to go on with his researches. He loves me in a certain way, but he cares really for nothing alive, only for his experiments and his beloved sculptures. It would kill him to have to go back to the world again. Besides, what would he do? He has no more idea of making a living for us both, even if he were not much too old, than that chair has. And I can never leave him, you see that. So we stay and stay.— Shall I light the lamp?"

"No, don't move. The firelight's pleasant, isn't

it?" He stared into the red glow of the stove that stood in the grate.

The story rang true enough, yet he was not quite satisfied. If she could tell him so much, why not more? But after all, he reflected, why should she? As a complete stranger to her, one who had descended literally out of the blue (or the grey!) and who had taken all from her hands and given nothing, it was a wonder that she had unburdened herself to him even so far as to tell him of the misfortune that had pursued her practically ever since her childhood, and the guileless, trusting old professor, her father. How little of happiness had come her way! All her young life had been spent at the mercy of an old scientist obsessed by a mad dream, and by probably unscrupulous men who seized on her simplicity, her faith and her queer mediumistic gifts to make her their tool. It was a damned shame, he thought hotly — she had had no youth, none of the pleasures of youth, and yet she was beautiful and desirable, and full of the grace and charm of a beautiful and desirable girl.

Involuntarily, his intense longing to make her happy and to shower on her that affection she had missed translated itself into action, and he put his arm round her and drew her close to his breast.

# CHAPTER XIX

LIKE a little grey dove nestling against her mate, Julia lay on his breast and made no movement to free herself, and no sound save a little sigh that escaped her lips. To Morrison's enchanted senses it seemed a sigh of supreme content, of intense relief, as though she who so wearily had been battling against the storm alone had found haven at last.

It cost him a good deal of self-control to hold in leash his desire to bend and kiss her mouth, to press his lips to her hair, to murmur over and over again, "Julia, I love you — let me take you away from all this, take you somewhere where we can be happy and alone together!" But again, the very thought that they were indeed, to all intents and purposes, alone together in that house but for the sick professor who lay asleep in his bedroom along the corridor, curbed his leaping pulses. She trusted him so absolutely, just as no doubt she had trusted those villainous Silvertons, and surely no one but the completest cad could have taken advantage of her simplicity. Why, it would be like hurting a child!

But even though he wouldn't let himself kiss her,

those moments were sacred and supremely happy ones for Morrison. For both of them, he believed — at least, he hoped. Julia must surely love him a little if she did not repulse him, even though that gentle embrace might seem to her more of a brotherly than a loverly one. And yet, in that room lighted only by the red glow of the stove, and with no sound but the wind lashing the trees gently out in the deserted garden of the house of mystery, with a beautiful girl in his arms, with an old man who had poisoned himself for the sake of science lying ill on his bed not far away, with the return of the two brothers imminent, and with one of the most menacing plots the country had suffered on the verge of exposure — the stage already setting for the last act of the drama, indeed—that was surely a strange predicament for any man to be in, even for one whose daily work carried him into the very heart of strange events.

Neither marked the passage of time — but presently it was Julia who broke up their little glimpse of heaven. She sat upright and looked straight into his eyes. Her own were happy and serene, free from the shadow that habitually dwelt in them, and beaming with a light he had never seen in them before.

And then, once again, even as their eyes sought

refuge the one in the other, the light of happiness faded from hers and died away, and something like panic took its place.

"You must go," she breathed, and rose quickly and stood before him. "Don't ask me anything — only — please go quickly."

"But Julia! Why?" Then, as a sudden thought assailed him, "You are not afraid?"

"For you — only for you! Please!" she begged agitatedly. "I should never have let you stay, I have been wrong — but go now while there is still time." She wrung her hands, obviously labouring under the most urgent fear of something unknown to him.

Morrison was at a complete loss to understand this sudden reversal of her former request. He tried to reason with her.

"Why Julia, only ten minutes ago you asked me to stay! Mrs. Barrett has left, and we are going to take turns to sit up with your father, you and I. That's the plan, isn't it? Nothing has happened to change it."

"Something has," Julia said in a low voice.

A light broke in on him. "You mean —— Oh, my dear!— not that?" He was afraid to finish the sentence, to ask what he so urgently wanted to know, whether she loved him. He, too, rose, and they faced

each other. He would have taken her in his arms again, but suddenly she evaded him and lifted her hand with a gesture of warning.

"Hark! It's my father — I must go, he's calling. But oh, please," she begged earnestly, "get ready to start at once."

"But why — why?"

She had slipped away already, gone like a wraith from his ken, and he was left puzzled and almost angry.

Either her words were merely the outcome of a fear to be alone in the house with him now that he had virtually declared his love for her and asked hers in return, or they must mean that his presence there was dangerous either to her and her father, or to himself. She had said as much, indeed. Things were getting interesting, if that were so. Her words could only, he assumed, refer to the return of the Silvertons — what else could there be that would menace her safety?

Limping up and down the room, he turned the matter over in his thoughts. Her sudden change of mind was disconcerting, for if there *were* danger, she must have known of it all along and have been willing to let him face it. Until — his heart leaped at the thought — until perhaps she realised she really did care for him a little, while his arms had

been about her a few moments ago? It was a solution of the problem he hardly dared to tell himself was a probable one. And yet he could think of no other satisfactory conclusion except the first one he had come to, that she was afraid of him.

He smiled at that. She didn't know him, how could she, and his almost puritanical regard for women. He would soon reassure her if that were all. Perhaps he *had* been premature, perhaps she was not ready for love; he would be very careful not to frighten her again. In any case he had no intention of obeying her wishes and clearing out. The very fact of her disclosure of the possibility of danger would make him all the more determined to stay; it might mean that some development was on foot; and in any case, if there were danger, he had no intention of abandoning her to it. Poor kid, she wasn't used to having any one look after her.

Julia's voice came to him through the open door, soothing the old professor in his room. Her unselfishness, the way she sacrificed herself for others, warmed him through and through.

On more than one occasion he had wondered if she really had recognised him as the detective of the Cologne studio, in spite of the thin disguise of the dark glasses and the little black moustache. She had caught him off his guard about those spectacles,

once — had twitted him with the fact that she had never seen him without them! Still, he did not believe it. At Cologne, she had been too distressed and panicked, probably, to take any stock of his general appearance during those few minutes together — or, of course, on the other hand, everything might have stamped itself all too clearly on her memory.

Of one thing he felt certain — she had not recognised him when he first came to this house in the valley. She was too transparent to have dissembled then; and even if she hadn't been he would undoubtedly have spotted it. That remark about the glasses might have been made by anybody — it wasn't usual to come upon people attired in smoked spectacles when you brought in their breakfast of a morning! Especially on dark winter mornings before the curtains were drawn. It was a foolish disguise under the circumstances, though good enough for ordinary purposes; and, of course, he had hardly been prepared at the outset for the quite extraordinary uses to which it had had to be put.

There hadn't even been the excuse of the morning paper for those glasses, he smiled to think, because that didn't arrive till Mrs. Barrett, the red-faced woman of the shop down by the jetty, and Julia's charwoman, brought it, which was at any hour of the day, as he now knew, that the tide served

for her walk along the rocky shore to the tunnel.

Remembrance of that caused his thoughts to switch off for a moment to the newspaper Jackson had thrust upon him that afternoon and he pulled it out of his pocket and opened it idly, still brooding over the problem.

Not for worlds would he have lighted the lamp to read that wretched paragraph — those rosy moments alone with Julia in his arms were too near and too precious to want to dispel them — and she would come back directly. He knelt on the hearth-rug before the stove and opened the pages idly, turning them over till he came to a paragraph Jackson had marked in heavy black pencil which outlined a couple of inches or so of type down in the corner of a column of local titbits headed "The Gossip's Bowl" and read:

"Rumour has it that the fabled 'ghost train' that keeps the heads of the few residents of a sea-coast hamlet not a hundred miles from our town tucked well under their respective blankets o' nights has been heard again. Not seen, because no one sees the phantom visitant and lives. A few weeks ago a tramp met his death in a suspicious manner in the railway waiting-room of the remote station through which the train is said to pass once a month. The mystery is heightened by the disappearance

from one of our hotels of a commercial traveller who borrowed a bicycle from the 'boots' and then discarded it on a stretch of lonely cliff road not far from this station of ill-fame. The machine was, happily, recognised and returned to its owner by a friend of the lender who chanced to be cycling along the road — but the disappearance of the borrower appears to be complete.

"Our police force is a pretty active one, but we were met on inquiry with the usual 'we-have-the-matter-in-hand' attitude, and with the usual scepticism on the 'ghost train's' account. This legend has persisted for twenty years in our neighbourhood, however, and we recommend our worthy Superintendent to a fuller investigation of the whole matter. Inquiry at the hotel this morning proved that nothing had been heard of the missing man."

Morrison's first reaction to the reading of those paragraphs was a most emphatic and wholehearted disgust at the methods of the police in allowing such a statement to be made public. He damned them unreservedly for a full half minute. Why, that silly little bit of gossip might have the effect of ruining the whole of his calculations and spoil the gradual building-up of the plan he had been evolving during weeks! It would draw attention to the place, even though no name were mentioned, and bring hordes

of curious people to the station, all agog to find out something of the mystery; he knew only too well that craving in human nature after the morbid and sinister that was always demanding satisfaction.

Reading the paragraph again, however, he wasn't so sure. People were not particularly interested in tramps and commercial travellers, both the dullest of dull folk, especially the latter. If the victims had been dukes, now, or even simple knights, the thing would have been different. And the legend was nothing new — the local residents must be used to it by this time, and if they had not already bestirred themselves to fathom it, the disappearance of a commercial traveller (in patent foods, too!) would hardly be inducement enough to make them want to do so now.

On the whole, he was not sure whether a good turn hadn't been done to the cause — it might have the effect of keeping frightened heads still more securely tucked "under their blankets o' nights."

Perhaps, after all, old Jackson had had a finger in that pie! It wouldn't surprise him. He ended the matter by broadly grinning at the printed page in the firelight; and Julia caught something very like a smothered laugh as she came into the room carrying the tea-tray.

She looked at him in silent amazement, reproach-

fully; and in self-defence (there was little enough for *her* to laugh at, poor girl!) he got to his feet to assist her and held out the newspaper to her, with the apologetic remark:

"I was reading rather an amusing little paragraph there, about your ghost train, Julia; you're getting quite famous," and watched her closely to see the effect of the words.

She put the tray down slowly, and took the paper from his hand as if it might burn her, and all the while her eyes were fastened on his as if she were afraid something would frighten her again — afraid of fear. Morrison, setting cups on the little table near the window in the way he had often watched her do it — perhaps it was the last time they would have tea together — and waiting for her to speak, recalled her panic when the subject of the legend had cropped up before.

Julia put the paper down now, however, without betraying any more emotion than a slight trembling of the hands; but her low reply, "Perhaps it is amusing — to you," told him that none of the arguments he had put forward then had assailed her rooted belief in the phantom appearance.

Her mind now was obviously preoccupied with the matter as they drank tea when she had brewed it from the kettle on the stove; and suddenly she

put her cup down with a rattle on its saucer and burst out:

"Mr. Gascoigne — please! If you have any regard for my wishes, will you go away from this place, now! Go back to Truro!"

"No, Julia." He faced her squarely. "I'm hanged if I do. If there's a likelihood of any monkey-puzzling, I'm staying here to see it through. Besides, you forget. How am I to get to Truro? You were going to telephone to the hotel, you know. I can hardly expect this foolish leg to carry me all the way, can I?"

"There's the station," she replied faintly. "I could show you the short way — help you to get there. There must be a train — even if you have to wait — the last one goes at seven. You would be better there than here."

"I might," he replied. "But I won't. Once for all, Julia, my dear, I am going to stay with you here until you can get some one else to keep you company — till Mrs. Barrett comes, if you like — until your father is better. Or until ——" he paused.

"Until ——?"

She leaned forward across the table eagerly.

"Until," Morrison went on deliberately, "that happens which you and I are expecting to happen."

"And what is that?" she breathed.

He shrugged his shoulders. "You know as much as I do about that, Julia."

She paused before saying, "Then, you are quite determined?"

"Quite."

She said no more. They sat in silence for ten minutes or so, then she rose and began to put the tea-things together. Apparently she had accepted his decision to remain, and shrunk from pursuing the conversation further for fear of disclosing the secret, whatever it was, that weighed so heavily on her.

"Would you take that tray," she requested, "and carry it to the kitchen."

He smiled, pleased that she had asked him to do something, however trivial, to assist her, and taking the tray from her hands proceeded to hobble away with it, while Julia looked after him with an expression of despair that seemed unnecessarily hopeless in view of the triviality of the office.

When he pushed open the door of the little kitchen along the corridor, he found himself face to face with the red-faced charwoman, Mrs. Barrett.

## CHAPTER XX

MORRISON stumped back to the sitting-room with a frown on his face.

It was the second or third time that he had caught Julia in a lie, and his mouth was set in a very determined line as he faced her in the firelight. Was it impossible for the girl to go straight? Lovely as she was, innocent as his whole being cried out she must be, yet with those damning lies to her discredit, he felt he could not remain a moment longer in the grip of this hideous tangle of plot and counterplot. It was a little matter, of course, her tale that Mrs. Barrett was unable to stay, and then his finding her there all the time in the kitchen, but it was this accumulation of little things that made it so distressingly difficult to see ahead, and to plan his campaign with any certainty. Why trouble to fib about so unimportant a thing? What the dickens did it matter whether the woman remained or not?

He stopped a few paces in the room and looked straightly at the girl.

"Mrs. Barrett didn't go after all, then?" he said bluntly.

"No?" she murmured, but he thought she

drooped a little, though she met his glance bravely enough. "I thought ——"

"You *knew* she didn't," he cut in, now thoroughly roused. Once more, was this girl fooling him? "Why was it necessary to lie to me, Julia? What other reason had you for asking me to stay? Why make Mrs. Barrett's departure the excuse, if she wasn't going after all? What was the real reason?"

"I can't tell you," Julia cried desperately, as if his anger had evoked some answeringly overpowering emotion in her own breast. "I have begged you to go since, and you have refused. You ——" She stopped all at once and whirled round towards the window.

Morrison had seen it too — the flickering flash of a light in the darkness, that came and went and came again, stabbing at the blackness of the window like a great torch, or the come-and-go of summer lightning. And instantly he recognised it for what it was — the headlight of a car that was coming slowly down the tangled-over drive, a light cut off now and then by the trunks of trees or masses of evergreens in alternating darkness and brilliancy. Then came the honk of the horn, and Julia gave a little shriek of alarm and put her hand to her mouth.

"Now — it is too late," she cried wildly. "Oh,

go, go! *They are coming!*" She fled out into the corridor and was back in a moment with his raincoat and hat in her hands. "I beg you, go," she implored, thrusting them into his hands. "Take this stick of father's ——"

But Morrison stood immovable, a cynical smile twisting his lips. "I'd like to see the end of this comedy," he remarked. "To know just what you're up to."

The noise of the car's engine was now plainly audible.

"Comedy?" she echoed. "If you only knew just what a tragedy it will be for me if you stay!"

He looked at her steadily for an appreciable second. Something in the appeal of those grey eyes, once again, clouded with an agony the cause of which he was striving to fathom, some queer trick of the heart that refused in spite of himself to harden against her, caused the breaking of the barricade. He shrugged his shoulders. Those misty grey eyes had won again.

"All right, Julia. I'll go."

He got into his coat.

"This way then — and quick!"

She flitted before him out into the corridor and opened the door to the garden, casting back a glance

that begged him to hurry. Nevertheless, on the threshold he hesitated a second.

"Julia, I hate leaving you like this! Why not let me stay? I could help perhaps."

"No, no — for my sake!"

He bent and kissed her forehead. "Good-bye, then. We shall meet again."

"The tide's not up yet," she whispered hurriedly. "But there's no time to lose. Through the tunnel, quick, and — good-bye."

He stepped down into the misty garden among dripping trees that were dark and damp with November rain. The door closed softly behind him. Even as it did so the car swung at a slow pace round the bend of the drive into the circle of gravel that fronted the house and two men, one the driver, alighted, wrapped in leathern coats and muffled to the chin.

That little pause at the threshold of the door had been exactly calculated to serve the detective's purpose, for he had determined, come what may, not to leave the house until he had caught a glimpse of the mysterious inhabitants of the luxurious upstairs chambers. In the brilliant light cast by the electric lamps, the two faces showed up vividly above their wrappings, and Morrison's alert eyes took in every detail. The reaction was such that he

uttered a startled ejaculation and involuntarily edged closer against the cover of the wall, a movement that was badly manœuvred, because his game leg slipped on the gravel and for a second's fraction brought his own face within the glare of the lamps.

It was enough. That they had seen him he was not left long in doubt. And then things began to happen quickly. There were muttered curses, the sound of steps crunching the gravel, and the next instant a bullet whizzed within an ace of his cheek. Morrison leaped rather than ran towards the entrance to the tunnel blockaded with its trailing strands of winter greenery, using the old man's stick as a sort of alpenstock. Stumbling, slipping, swiftly enough in spite of his disability, he gained the darkness of the cave.

But his pursuers were close on his heels and to enter it would be madness. He could expect no mercy at the hands of the two, for he had recognised them and he knew they would not stop short of murder — and in that tunnel they would be fools indeed if they failed to put him satisfactorily out of the way and leave not a trace of the crime.

At its very mouth he swerved briskly to one side and stood taut against the rock — felt their clothes almost brush past him as they ran full tilt into the darkness of it, firing shot after shot. He

laughed a little noiseless laugh at the excitement and the adventure of it.

He heard their hurried footsteps retreating to the extreme end of the tunnel — no doubt they knew every step of it blindfold — and wedged himself further in among the sodden leaves, taking advantage of the pause to whip off and pocket his obstructing glasses. They would doubtless make a search of the garden on their return, unless, as he hoped and was quite possible, they would believe he had had enough start to get clear of the tunnel and hide himself among the rocks of the seashore, as he would have if it hadn't been for that infernal foot. He waited, scarcely daring to breathe.

It seemed an incredibly long time before he heard the sound of returning footsteps; but they came at last and, muttering in low voices, the two men miraculously passed him and went towards the house without a pause. Yes, they had supposed him hidden and had given up the search as a bad job. He could see their dark outlines shadowly printed in the surrounding gloom for a second, and listened intently till the crunching on the gravel ceased as they turned the corner of the house again. Luckily, neither of the two appeared to have a torch upon him.

For that matter, Morrison hadn't a torch either,

and if he had he would have been afraid to use it in the difficult negotiation of that smugglers' cave he now ventured upon. It was far too near the house, and he had, of course, no idea of what sort of observation posts the two calling themselves the Silverton brothers kept, nor, having aroused them from their dream of security, what means they had of immediate flight. But, judging by the inhospitable way a stranger about the premises had been received, he assumed there was very good reason to suppose this particular moment was an important one in these carryings-on.

A faint luminosity within the circle that was the tunnel's exit told him that he was nearing the shore; and now the sound of the surf came suddenly to him as the horizon opened, grey and distant. Out here, it was lighter a good deal than it had been in the hollow behind the quarries, where full light could never penetrate. The shore stretched away on his left hand, strewn with huge boulders, and backed by the high cliffs, while on his right a barricade of rock reached out to the sea and blocked progression in that direction, all scarcely visible in the winter darkness. The rain fell softly. He could hear it sizzling in the little pools he tried to avoid; but the wind seemed to be getting up, and he hoped the rain would cease soon, chiefly because — he remembered

it with a wry grin as he splashed into a pool in the dark — he was still wearing the old professor's bedroom slippers.

# CHAPTER XXI

MORRISON put in a good twenty minutes' breathless scrambling over rocks, getting wet to the knees in cold and unexpected pools, wading through slushy sand and barking his shins before he judged it safe to pause and take stock of the situation. It was awkward going with that cumbersome left foot, which was by no means fit to stand him good service in such a test. Still, he had made fairly good progress and the odds were, he believed, in his favour, if the two brothers should decide to make further pursuit. The rocky coast afforded a first class game of hide and seek and it would take them all their time to locate a man on his guard against discovery.

On that score he felt safe enough. The thing that really worried him was the fact that he had left Julia in that house of mystery alone with two unscrupulous villains like the Silvertons. A few minutes before he had made his escape from the house she had succeeded in shattering once again the belief in her he had been so laboriously trying to build up against his better judgement during his weeks in her company. Pendulum-wise, that belief in her truthfulness and sincerity had swung back and forth,

alternating between scepticism of her motives and an intense desire to hold her in his thoughts as sinned against but not sinning. He thought he had succeeded in that, and now again at the very last moment, it appeared she was incapable of dealing straightly. But for that little fib about Mrs. Barrett (such a small thing, but so vital to his peace of mind), he knew he would have remained at the house to meet the Silvertons and either bluff the thing out or take whatever consequences might have ensued. He would have over-ridden her objections and her pretended concern on his behalf — and here his mouth set in grim lines as he thought of her duplicity.

Now the only thing left for him to do was to rid himself as soon as possible of every vestige of feeling for her.

He settled himself on a piece of jutting rock against the cliff wall and considered matters in their more immediate aspect, deliberately shutting his mind to thought of the girl.

It must be, he judged, getting on for seven o'clock. They had had tea, he and Julia, late that afternoon, following the doctor's visit. Sweeping a glance round to make sure as possible that there was no one in his immediate neighbourhood, he struck a match in cupped fingers, and by its light

made out the hands of his wrist watch. Yes, about eight minutes to seven. The last train for Truro left at seven — as far as he could see he was faced with the cheerful prospect of spending the night literally on the rocks. There would probably be no one after the seven o'clock train at the little station of Fal Vale, which, doubtless, as was the way of remote country stations, would be bolted and barred till the first morning train — and even under the best of circumstances and with two sound limbs there would scarcely be a chance of sprinting to the railway in eight minutes, along that rock-strewn shore.

He had plenty of time for reflection, then. The tide looked as though it had still a long way to climb over the sand and rock before he need bestir himself. At the same time it wouldn't do to leave it too late with an unknown bit of coast, and that possibly a treacherous one. The horizon showed a faintly grey glimmer, a mere thin silvery band along the skyline. Mounds of black rock interrupted his view of it here and there, like a menagerie of sinister beasts let loose. The dull murmur of the waves breaking, away off, might almost be their growling. The rain, fortunately, fell now only in a slight drizzle, and the cliff behind him gave a certain amount of protection. He would have been fairly comfortable, indeed, but for an aching foot,

if he could have lighted his pipe. But that was too dangerous yet.

What, he wondered, would the Chief have done under similar circumstances? But then, the Chief would never have allowed himself and his feelings to come under the dominion of a beautiful girl criminal with misty grey eyes — "Doesn't do to have feelings where women of that sort are concerned. Take my advice, young feller, cut 'em out." He could remember the very inflection of voice the Chief had used in delivering himself of that sound piece of instruction, early in the whole affair. He drew in a sharp breath. In spite of it all he was up to the neck and over in love with Julia.

Then he pulled himself up with a jerk. Hadn't he decided to cast her out of his mind? Hadn't that last interview with her taught him his lesson, yet? Was he willing to make a still bigger fool of himself? No, a hundred times no! He had done with her — with all women. He would cut them out. He'd take the Chief's words for Gospel.

Well, then, having disposed of the girl — so he told himself resolutely — what should be the next step?

"The next step, old son, is a very literal one. You'd better foot it to the jetty and get along to the station as quickly as you can. The middle of a

stretch of unknown, deserted and rock-bound coast, on a winter's night and a cold and rainy one at that, with the tide coming up, is hardly the place to hesitate about what to do next, or to make your lovesick repinings over ——— "

He got up, somewhat stiffly, and limped on. Lucky he had the old fellow's stick. It helped him greatly in the mushy sand and enabled him to detect the hidden masses of rock that cropped up everywhere among it. He had to feel his way for a considerable distance without the aid of matches, for he felt it unwise to risk a light, even in that deserted and lonely place. It was astonishing how far a little flame of a single match threw its beam, and at what a distance it could be seen.

Everything, he felt, depended now on himself. Jackson would have carried out his instructions and put an invisible guard at the salient points, but neither Jackson nor any other living soul outside the radius of the plot itself knew what he knew, and what he had discovered in that underground workshop of the old professor.

Therefore, it behooved him to be scrupulously careful about the least thing; even about such a little thing as striking a match on the dark and derelict shore to aid him in his difficult way, or, more necessary, to allow him the satisfaction of the friend-

ship of his pipe. How good that pipe would be presently! And, by Jove, a good drink of beer — such a drink as he and poor Heath had enjoyed in the hotel at Cologne, just before he got back to London, the last time he had seen Heath alive.

Preoccupied with his thoughts, he scarcely noticed that the booming noise of the sea was increasing momentarily, and it was not till a sudden gleam of white foam slid almost to his feet as it fled round a jutting rock and crawled back again stealthily, that he was startled into knowledge that the tide was coming up very quickly indeed. He must put his best foot foremost, he decided, which was a proceeding not so easy as it might have been, taking all things into consideration: his slippers, for instance, or, rather, the Professor's — the thin leather soles were as soft and sloppy as a sheet of wet brown paper, the uppers were sodden; his hat was dripping water down the back of his neck, his raincoat flapped damply about him.

Altogether, the adventure seemed to have lost a good deal of its zest; but still he struggled on, taking some slight comfort in the thought that the next few days — possibly the next few hours — would either see the end of the affair or else the whole fabric of his calculations would come tumbling down like a pack of cards. In which case, " I'll become a

traveller in patent foods," he told himself cynically.

Away ahead, he could just make out dimly the straggling shape of the little jetty, curving towards him like a hooked finger, a slightly darker shadow in the prevailing greyness. Beyond it, he knew, were the cottages, and then a little farther on, the station. And just then he heard the faint, sharp whistle of a train. It was the seven o'clock, five minutes or so late, leaving the platform — the last train to Truro. Of course, he had had no hope of catching it, but it left him with rather a lost feeling nevertheless.

Where the dickens should he spend the night? There were the cottages, it was true, but he would have to avoid the neighbourhood of the natives till the final dénouement of the piece. It was essential that his whereabouts should not be known, or any suspicion aroused, even if the Silvertons were not already on his track. Nothing could be easier than to circumlocute his movements — they had only to take the road by car to cut him off as it was. There was no chance of being picked up by a passing vehicle, of course. No, better to spend the night among the rocks on the shore than run that risk.

But the tide was getting unpleasantly high. It was creeping up at a great rate, and in a short time

the water would be almost at the base of the cliffs along the edge of which he crawled.

And then, quite suddenly, Morrison became aware of a flickering lightning in the darkness behind him. He swung round hastily. Yes, there could be no mistaking it — no doubt as to what those quick flashes in long rays across the sea from a powerful light meant. Some one was signalling. Three flashes, then blackness — three more in quick succession, and again the dark.

After a moment of blank surprise he turned and hurried on. Amid the seething stir of the encircling waters that seemed now to be trying to cut off his approach to the jetty which he could see a hundred yards ahead, the thought raced through his brain: Had they got wind of the fact that their plot was on the point of revelation, and were they giving a warning of his flight? If so, how had they become possessed of the information? Whose had been the slip, whose the treachery that had given the game away? There leaped to his brain one name — Julia! He refused to give it house-room! Julia! But that would mean that she had recognised him and had known all the time. No, he would never believe that of her, never!

Dizzily he floundered on through the rising waters which, by this time, were flooding round his

ankles and surging higher with each succeeding wave to his knees, his waist. It swirled and thundered about him; every returning wash of the cold water more imperatively bent on securing its prey than the last. He was almost exhausted when, after an interminable period of struggling, he felt, to his intense relief, the hard stone steps of the jetty. He breathed a prayer of thanksgiving. One step — one, two, three — how incredibly difficult it was to clamber up against the seething snatch of the waters below that tried to drag him back to them again — four — five — how heavy and tired his limbs were! and a dark figure bending over him, seizing him, hauling him to the top.

# CHAPTER XXII

He lay on the cold slab of stone and for a moment remembered nothing but that somehow he had managed to get out of the reach of the waters' grasp. He found himself muttering Jackson's name; then, complete consciousness returning, sat up and looked at his rescuer. For a moment he thought it was one of the Silvertons; then Morrison recognised him as a policeman he had seen in Fuller's office at the Truro police-station weeks ago. He was in plain clothes now.

"I'm Morrison," he said vaguely, hoping much explanation was not needed, "from Scotland Yard. Is Jackson anywhere within reach?"

"He's up on the cliff, sir." The plain clothes man had recognised the other also by good fortune, and saluted respectfully.

"Fine. Can you get him to come down here for a moment, do you think?"

"Yes, sir." He was off into the darkness, and Morrison waited as cheerfully as a being soaked to the skin, cold to the marrow of his bones, and bruised more or less all over, could. He was intensely thankful to learn of Jackson's presence —

whatever that might betoken. Something unusual, obviously.

Jackson himself enlightened him five minutes later.

"An unexpected surprise, seeing you, sir! Thought you was safely tucked up down below, there." He jerked his thumb in the direction of the house hidden below the quarry. "Anything I can do for you?"

"A great deal, Jackson. But first, what are you doing here yourself?"

They talked in low voices, scarcely above a cautious whisper.

"Accordin' to instructions received, sir, I detailed my men at the various points indicated," Jackson remarked ponderously. "And then, from the cliff road up there, I saw some rather funny stuff going on — at least it looked that way to me. Lights flashin'— signallin'. Looked as though some one was sendin' a message out to sea, sir. So I came down along the cliff to see if I could make out what it was."

"Ah! I saw it too, from the shore. Lucky finding you, Jackson — you're always where I want you, old bean."

Jackson grinned with pleasure at the praise, rolling his round eyes.

"Try to be, sir — you're very wet, Cap'n. Better put on my coat." And the good fellow proceeded to peel off his own heavy mackintosh. Morrison stopped him with a gesture of his hand.

"Wet! I should think I am. I've been wading over these darned rocks for the last half hour, and the tide caught me. But you'd have to give me your trousers and your shirt and everything else too — especially your boots. I started out in a pair of the old professor chap's indoor slippers — I've lost one, I see." He squeezed off the other, and held up the dripping mass of pulp. "Hardly the best kind of footgear for scrambling over rocks in the rain, Jackson. You must get me back to Truro somehow. Any of your men got cycles?"

"Most of 'em, sir."

"Send one back as quickly as possible for a car. I couldn't face a ten-mile bicycle ride to-night, Jackson, in one wet slipper and a groggy leg. Besides, I want to talk to you."

"Right. Newton!" He beckoned to the plain clothes man, and gave him directions.

"And now, Jackson, if you really love me, you'll give me a pipeful of baccy. Let's get well under that cliff in the shelter, and keep your eye skinned. Ah! That tastes good, Jackson. Light up yourself."

Morrison puffed in enjoyment for a few moments before speaking again.

"Wonderful how a pipe puts a different complexion on the most worrying sort of matters, Jackson?"

"Yes — but you'll catch your death sitting about in them wet clothes. Better keep moving, sir."

"Wet clothes be hanged. I've had enough exercise to last me the rest of the evening. You forget I've been a regular invalid for nearly a month. You think, then, that was a signal to a ship in the bay, Jackson?"

"What else could it 'a' been, sir?"

"It didn't strike you our little game might have been spotted, and that it's anything to do with us, then?"

Jackson scratched his head. "I confess it didn't. No one knew we were on the track of anything — if we are."

"We are, all right," Morrison assured him with conviction. "Who put that little paragraph in the paper, do you think?" he went off at a tangent.

"Yes, that was a bit of a puzzler, wasn't it, sir?"

Morrison looked at him sideways, but Jackson was staring innocently out at the black waste of sea beyond the end of the little jetty.

"Wasn't it? Well, Jackson, I've been chased

out of that house by the two Silvertons to-night. They fired after me and missed."

"The deuce they did!" Jackson twisted round to stare at his chief. "So you think they're wise as to your identity?"

Morrison shook his head, "I'm not so sure of that, but I think with the dangerous game they're playing they'd be suspicious of the archangel Gabriel. Anyhow, we've got to *assume* they're in the know. Now, what's the line they're likely to take, Jackson?"

"Lie low for a bit, I should think," Jackson opined after a pause, "till it's blown over."

"Just my idea. I am inclined to think that there will be nothing doing to-night. In fact, I'm banking on it. But, all the same, they won't be able to wait too long for the culmination of their thieves' game, Jackson."

"No!" Jackson agreed guilefully. He was completely mystified, but he tried not to let it appear.

"Do you know why? No, I see you don't."

Morrison took the pipe from his mouth, and knocked the ashes softly out on the ground beside him.

"The reason is that it's exactly a month to-morrow since Heath was killed. The twenty-ninth of October was the day, Jackson. And it was that

day — just a month ago to-morrow — that this alleged ghost train made its last journey, so the station master told me. It's supposed to run once a month, you know, Jackson."

"Oh, the ghost train!" Jackson's keen disappointment was evident in his tone. He had expected something more tangible than a ghost. "I didn't know you took that old tale seriously, sir. Anyhow, I don't see what it's got to do with the whole affair."

"Don't you? Well, perhaps I am wrong, Jackson. Perhaps it hasn't anything. Anyhow, we'll see — to-morrow. Come, let's walk a bit now, I'm getting as stiff as a plank. Thanks," as Jackson offered him an arm and helped him to his feet. "Yes, I may be wrong," he repeated reflectively, "and therefore we won't discuss it further, in case you'll have the laugh of me. We'll see — to-morrow."

They strolled up and down under the shadow of the low cliff in silence. The ground here was soft and had been protected from the rain by the overhanging rock, and Morrison experienced little inconvenience from his bootless condition.

His plan of action now seemed clear to him, but he was not desirous of talking about it to his assistant. After all, so much of it was based on pure conjecture, and though in his own mind he had little doubt that he was right, there was nothing to be

gained by laying himself open to the charge of following a will o' the wisp. Jackson's business, after all, was to carry out his instructions. "Never tell your dream." So he smoked in a more or less contented silence, walking side by side with Jackson up and down the stretch of black shadow under the cliff road, waiting till the policeman should return with the car to take him back to the Truro hotel.

Scarcely more than an hour had passed since he had left the house in the valley that sheltered the woman he loved and would always love in spite of everything; and yet it seemed now as though the time he had spent there was already far past, a dream, or even a figment of the brain that had had no reality. Whenever he allowed himself to dwell on Julia — and always he tried hard to blot her out of his thoughts as soon as she entered them — it was with an uneasiness that amounted to pain.

There she was in that secreted place alone with her sick father, who had committed the incredible act of experimenting on himself for the sake of science, and with the Silvertons — at their mercy — and God knew of what they were capable. He tried to shake himself free of the thought. Perhaps he was exaggerating; no doubt they treated her with every respect apart from the influence she had told him they exercised over her. But then, was

she to be trusted to have told him the truth? A woman capable of lying in small things might also deceive him in important matters — and how easily he had been hoodwinked, he whose business it was to unmask the deceits of humanity.

Not for the first time Morrison breathed a sigh of relief at the thought that he was undertaking this queer bit of business more or less in an unofficial capacity. He was, on the Chief's advice, taking a little holiday, a rest, and he had chosen to take it in Cornwall. It was really his own business — this investigation of the death of his friend Heath—that had started the whole thing, even if the Chief *had* let him have some men to help him and given him *carte blanche* — more as compensation than anything. Queer how far from the original point the affair had carried him — queer how much farther it was likely to carry him if all his conjectures fitted in — how it might change all his life.

Presently the soft hum of an engine on the road above roused the unofficial detective from his musings into the immediate present. How jolly glad he would be to get out of these wet things and into a warm bath, and a change!

Five minutes later they had climbed the steep bit of road from the granite jetty to the cliff-top and

he was ready to get into the car and leave Jackson in charge of the business — till to-morrow.

"Till to-morrow, Jackson. And if ——"

Even as he spoke, distantly across the shore and the black pit of heaving waters, a light flashed out again — the same light that he had seen when he was struggling along on the rocky coast below, and that had, by good fortune, brought Jackson to his aid. It flashed once, twice, thrice — and now for a single second of time its bright beam picked out and held vividly in its ray a boat that was lying a mile or so out in the bay — a tramp steamer by the look of her, small and motionless.

Then the flash disappeared, and the little vessel was swallowed up once more in the darkness. Not a light twinkled. Nothing below but that huge black pit that was the ocean, and immediately beneath them the thinly blacker line telling where the jetty ran its crooked limb out into the water.

Morrison, one foot on the running board of the car, turned to look at Jackson. For a moment neither spoke. At length Morrison remarked:

"Looks as though you were right, Jackson. Some one's signalling that boat. Keep a close watch and inform me of any movement." He was silent again, lost in deep thought as if contemplating some

change of movement. Then he said, as if to himself, "No, let it go according to plan. Righto, I'm ready. There'll be more rejoicing over the one commercial traveller returning than over the ninety and nine who keep their heads well tucked under their blankets o' nights, eh, Jackson? At least, the boots at the Inn'll welcome me, for I owe him something on the hire of that bicycle."

He got into the car. It slid off along the darkness of the cliff road and in a moment was lost to sight.

# PART III

# CHAPTER XXIII

THE little station of Fal Vale, on the evening of the twenty-ninth of November, and a cold and rainy night at that, presented an appearance of unmitigated gloom, such as only wayside stations in the heart of an English country can. The single oil lamp outside the tiny waiting-room on the platform swung forlornly on the wind; and beneath it, wrapped in an oilskin coat, Saul Hodgkin the station-master waited. His ferrety green eyes above the eagle's beak of a nose looked with a mournful glance along the line of metals that every now and then shone out momentarily in the swing of the lantern.

He was waiting for the down local, whose terminus was the tiny junction that had acquired such an unenviable reputation, and it was already twenty minutes late. He had been obliged to let the Truro train go through without waiting for the local; but it was hardly likely that any passengers would descend to pick up the connection, and anyhow their troubles were their own. He was only anxious to shut up the station and get home.

"'Tisn't fit for a dog to be out on such a night, let alone a human man," he grumbled to himself,

and went and sat on the edge of the table in the dismal little waiting-room and stared gloomily into the ashes that the dead fire had scattered on the hearth.

A rumble in the distance warned him at length of the approach of the belated train, and he lifted himself moodily off the table and went outside again to await its arrival. A few minutes later it emerged slowly out of the dark night and drew up at the station, Saul watching the procedure with a sort of phlegmatic disgust which was considerably heightened when half a dozen travellers alighted, one after the other, from various parts of the train.

He tipped his peaked cap back from his forehead and scratched his head. "Now what the 'ell be they doing 'ere?" he asked himself grumblingly as he went off to attend to his duties.

The passengers consisted of two young couples: one obviously newly married, the other whose marriage was just as obviously not so new; a middle-aged lady carrying a parrot cage, and a dandified young man complete with eyeglass, a white muffler, a long cigarette-holder stuck in his mouth, and an air-cushion tucked under his arm.

One by one they drifted from the wet discomfort of the platform into the waiting-room which presented, however, a scarcely more attractive

appearance, with its nearly dead fire whose wafts of smoke were blown out into the room every now and then, its single gas-jet burning with a faint blue flame that threw gloomy shadows about the room, and its damp wall-paper hanging here and there in strips from the walls.

"I suppose," said the rather sulky voice of the first girl to enter, "this is the waiting-room?"

"Looks damnably like it," coolly replied the young man who was evidently a somewhat disgruntled husband.

"What smoke!" She half choked as a gust of wind blew down the chimney. "Just the sort of place you *would* bring me to. It's cold, wet and disagreeable."

"It's disagreeable right enough," he replied with meaning.

"You care a lot!"

"Well, hang it all, it's not my fault, is it? I'm not managing director of the infernal company, am I? It's that young fool's fault, losing his beastly hat and then pulling the blasted communication cord. But for him we should have caught the damned connection all right."

"And you," she remarked acidly, "would have lost a fine opportunity for swearing."

"Not at all. Opportunity for swearing, spe-

cially in this climate, is superfluous. What's this damned hole?" He opened the communicating door leading to the ticket office and went in, followed by his wife, as the station-master entered the waiting-room, the obviously honeymoon couple bringing up the rear.

"Well, all I says is this 'ere," Saul Hodgkin declared emphatically, "it bain't *my* fault. Ay, ay! Where be you going? Not that way!"

He bawled the last sentence out of the door, and, his words having no effect apparently, followed them by turning on his heel and going out again himself in an attempt to reclaim the recalcitrant traveller.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the bridegroom disgustedly, who, however, was a nice-looking boy of twenty-five or so. "What a hole! A cheery place, I don't think! And bless my soul, this is our wedding night! I say, darling, I'm most awfully sorry."

"It isn't your fault, Charlie," the pretty little bride declared with an evident intention of making the best of a bad job. "It was mother's. I knew we should be late — I was afraid we should miss that train at Exeter."

"Well, we don't want to hang about here long. Do we, darling? Hang it all, it's no joke. They'll

wonder what's happened at the hotel if we don't turn up. And I'm hungry and you're tired, Peggy, and we want to get to — our hotel."

The little bride blushed prettily, and thrust an encouraging arm through Charlie's, who was not to be so easily comforted, however.

"What I say is, hang that chap and his hat," he remarked vehemently. "No one but a born fool would stop a train because he'd lost his hat! Damn him!"

Peggy held her face up to be kissed, and at that moment the door opened again and the middle-aged lady with the parrot-cage entered, the station-master close on her heels.

"I beg your pardon, both of you," she apologised, as the two young people started apart. "This *is* the general waiting-room, I suppose?"

"Oh — er-er — not at all," protested Charlie. "Of course — oh, here's some more of them," as the first couple returned from the ticket-office.

"What a horrible smell of smoke!" remarked the lady with the parrot. "Phew! Phew!"

"I'm sure it's a nice fire," said Saul Hodgkin in a resentful voice, "for the time o' night."

"Well, we shall have to make it do until the next train, I suppose," the bride said hopefully.

Saul turned to her.

"I keeps on telling ye there bain't no next train."

"What!" cried the horrified bridegroom. "No next train?"

"There bain't no more trains till seven to-morrow morning."

"Look here," protested Charlie, "I simply must get this young lady — er — my wife — to Truro to-night."

"Sorry, sir, but you can't."

"We must have a special."

"There bain't no specials on this line, not for years there hasn't been."

"Then where can we hire a car?"

"There bain't no cars round here."

"Well, what do you suggest?" cried the exasperated bridegroom.

"If you wants to get anywhere to-night," replied the station-master stolidly, "you'll have to walk."

"Good heavens!" He turned to his wife. "I say, Pegs, I'm deucedly sorry, I'm afraid we're in a hell of a mess."

"Now, look here, porter," interposed the first young man, "we ——"

"'Scuse me, sir — station-master."

"Well, look here, do you really mean that we can't get any further to-night?"

"That's what I said," affirmed the station-master doggedly.

"Then where's the nearest hotel?"

"T'uro."

"Surely there's some place or other where we can stay the night?"

The station-master shook his head.

"Bain't no houses here. There be a farm five mile along the road ——"

"But surely *you* live somewhere?" urged his interrogator.

"I? I bi-cycles to T'uro."

The man who had been questioning Saul Hodgkin turned to the rest of the benighted travellers. "Well, ladies and gentlemen, as it looks as if we shall have to stay here till the morning, we'd better make ourselves known to each other. My name's Winthrop, and this (come here, Elsie) is my wife."

"Mine," said Charlie, "is Murdoch, and this is *my* wife."

"And I'm Miss Bourne," supplemented the middle-aged lady. "This is Joey." She indicated the parrot in its cage.

"That silly ass!" Winthrop exploded, as the

full force of their plight seized him. "By the way — where is he?"

"There be another gen'elman outside," the station-master volunteered.

"Well, we have to thank him for this predicament; him and his rotten hat," Winthrop grunted, and the middle-aged Miss Bourne broke in indignantly.

"He ought to be summoned or something. Why couldn't he leave the communication cord alone?"

"Yes — imbecile!" agreed Charlie Murdoch whole-heartedly. And then a resentful silence descended on the little company as the door opened yet again to admit the person under discussion. The white muffler loosely knotted round his throat, his air-cushion protruding like a bag-pipe's minus the pipes from beneath his arm, he trotted into the centre of the group which eyed him with distinct hostility.

The delinquent, however, appeared to be blissfully unconscious of anything amiss, and to regard the misfortune of his fellow travellers as rather a good joke.

"I say," he began, "what a topping little crib! Here we *all* are, then. What are we doing? Having a discussion?"

"Not at all," said Winthrop icily. "We were

all perfectly unanimous on the subject under discussion."

"How remarkable! So we're here till morning, eh? Rather priceless, isn't it? After all, a little adventure like this relieves the monotony of existence, doesn't it?"

"Young man," Miss Bourne demanded heavily, "what is your name?"

"My name, dear Madam?" He hunted in his pockets. "Sorry, I haven't a visiting card. But as a matter of fact, it's Deakin. Yes, Deakin — Edward Deakin."

"Well, Mr. Deakin, have you no sense of responsibility?" went on the irate lady.

"Responsibility?" asked Deakin, screwing up his face and peeking at her. "Whatever's that?"

"Your ignorance of the word," said Miss Bourne, "hardly surprises me. And I think — we *all* think — your lack of concern is monstrous, considering you are the direct cause of this most unpleasant contretemps."

"My good woman," Deakin began argumentatively.

"I'm not a good woman," began Miss Bourne warmly. "I — I mean — please do not address me with such unwarranted familiarity."

"Sorry. You ought to be fair," remarked the

young man. "How could I help my hat blowing away?"

"If you lean out of the window," Winthrop remarked drily, "it often happens. And anyhow, losing your hat was no excuse for pulling the communication cord."

"Don't you think so? Well, I do. It was a jolly nice hat," returned Deakin aggrievedly. "I only bought it last week. Besides," he brightened, "I've often wanted to pull the communication cord — such a refreshing idea!"

"Damn it, sir," broke in Murdoch. "Haven't you any sense of decency?"

The delinquent looked from one to the other utterly astonished, as if he really could not understand what all the fuss was about.

"You don't seem to have realised the facts of the case," continued the young bridegroom with considerable warmth. "First of all, you stick your head out of the window like the silly ass you are, and then, when your beastly hat blows off, you pull the communication cord and stop the train on an incline. Consequently we miss the connection at the junction and find ourselves in this god-forsaken hole. And, to top up with, you seem to think you have done us all a favour, instead of realising that here we are and here we shall have to stop!"

The station-master, who had been standing listening to the harangue, now interrupted with:

"Beg pardon, sir, but you can't stop here."

There was a chorus of "What?" "Eh?" "What do you mean?" "Where are we to go, then?"

Hodgkin lifted his hand. "I said as 'ow you can't stop 'ere. There being no traffic on the line everything shuts up for the night — signal box, station and all. I'm off 'ome. And before I goes I 'as to lock all this 'ere up."

"Don't be so damned silly!" cried Winthrop angrily. "What else can we do but stop here? Do you expect these ladies to walk five miles on a night like this to that farm?"

"Bain't no affair o' mine what you do," Saul responded. "All I know is you can't stop 'ere. Horders is horders."

Winthrop put his hand in his pocket and drew out some coins.

"Now come along, station-master," he said persuasively. "We're going to stay. Make the best of it — we'll see you get into no trouble."

Saul considered. The coins so temptingly offered before his eyes seemed to put a new complexion on the affair.

"Well, sir. I dunno. Seems I 'aven't no

choice," he admitted grudgingly, and pocketed the coins.

"That's the talk!" Winthrop said. "Come along, now, let's try to make these ladies comfortable. Any more chairs? Any coal?"

"Might be some in the ticket-office," the station-master volunteered, though not with any great alacrity.

"Well, let's go and see. Come along, Elsie. Come on, Murdoch."

In the general exodus to the inner room Charlie and his young wife somehow manœuvred to be left behind for a few minutes and he seized the opportunity to take her in his arms and kiss her. The tender embrace was interrupted by the sudden flying up of the ticket-office window, out of which the head of Mr. Deakin poked itself.

"All change! All change! Get in your queue, please! Sorry, sold out of tickets to London. Nothing but Wigan excursions left." Then, pretending to catch sight of Peggy and Charlie for the first time, he cried in mock contrition, "I say, I'm beastly sorry!"

"Don't mention it," said Murdoch furiously. "We're beginning to get quite used to you. Of all the prize asses ——"

"Ah! I believe some one likes me. 'When you

are harpy, friend of mine, and all your skies are blu-ue — ' Don't you like my voice? Then book your tour with Cook's." He withdrew his head and slammed down the window with such violence that Peggy jumped nervously.

"Now," said Winthrop, returning with a chair in either hand, followed by Saul Hodgkin carrying a coal-box, "we'll do our best to make things as cheerful as possible. Help me with this form, Murdoch, there's a good chap."

"We shall be awfully hungry before long," Mrs. Winthrop put in, peevishly.

"Anything edible here, station-master?" her husband demanded.

"Not a drop, sir."

Winthrop smiled. "Anything here to eat?"

"Not a bite, sir — 'cept water," he indicated the water-bottle on the table, "and we hardly counts that."

They drew up the forms and chairs round the replenished fire and seated themselves.

"Still hungry, ladies and gentlemen?" remarked Deakin pleasantly. "I'll soon fix that."

"Can you?" the ladies asked in eager chorus.

"Just coming, sir. One moment, madam." The exasperating young man went to the ticket-office and raised the flap, calling through: "Six roast

beef and veg." The flap fell down with a bang. "Sorry, sir, but the kitchen staff have gone boating. Oh, but never mind; there's a fly in the water-bottle."

Miss Bourne, who was sitting with her parrot-cage on her knee, called out solemnly:

"Young man, do you ever take anything in life seriously?"

"Oh, yes," he replied genially. "Whiskey."

"Insolent fellow!" cried Miss Bourne in high indignation, and turned her back upon him.

Deakin grinned fatuously at her and went and sat down in a corner, and the station-master made a move to go. "Seeing as 'ow you've all settled to stay 'ere, I'll be off 'ome. You can stop 'ere, seeing as 'ow you've made up your minds to it; but — " he added darkly, "not me."

"You'd better stay," said Winthrop. "We might want something. You know where things are. We shan't forget you."

Hodgkin paused in his walk to the door.

"What, me stay 'ere all night? Me stay in Fal Vale all night?" he asked, as if the idea was an unheard of one to him.

"Well, why not?" asked Murdoch.

"See 'ere," asked Hodgkin, "'aven't you never 'eard about this 'ere station?"

"Never even knew it was here," declared Winthrop. "*What* about it?"

The station-master paused to give effect to his words.

"It's 'aunted, sir."

The announcement was received with bated breath by the ladies and by a sudden little scream of laughter from Deakin.

"Why, if this isn't too absolutely priceless! The station's haunted!" he gurgled.

Hodgkin turned on him with great severity.

"You may laugh, sir. Maybe you'll laugh the other side of your face before morning."

"Do you mean," reasoned Winthrop, "that you believe in ghosts?"

"Aye, I do, sir." Hodgkin spoke with conviction. "There bain't many in these parts as don't. Not for a five pun note would I stay in this station; not to-night —" his voice took on a more sombre note — "of all nights."

# CHAPTER XXIV

In spite of themselves the little audience of six marooned travellers were impressed by the station-master's words, though they would not for worlds have admitted it. Winthrop tried to laugh off the uneasy feeling that the depressing atmosphere of the place and the continual drip of the rain on the roof was inducing among them.

"Well, you're not afraid to stay with us, I suppose? Anyhow, before you go you might tell us what to expect."

Saul Hodgkin moved towards the ticket-office. "No, I'll be getting home now."

"Look here, you needn't go yet," put in Charlie Murdoch. "Tell us all about the ghost — we want something to entertain us."

"Entertain ye?" The other lifted hands in amazed protest. "Powers above!"

Winthrop went over to Saul and slipped a further coin in his hand. The man looked at it and hesitated once again. Then he turned towards them reluctantly.

"Very well, I'll do it, though I warns you it bain't no pretty story, and I'd rather be going 'ome.

It be like this: twenty year ago this very night a man by the name of Ted Holmes used to be in charge of this 'ere station. Did you notice a bridge just down below?"

One or two of them had, it seemed.

"That," continued Hodgkin, "be a bridge over the river Ross. It be a swing bridge an' used to be worked by a lever out 'ere on this very platform. In them days quite big boats did come up the river after the china clay. Them don't come now." He paused.

"Well?" encouraged Winthrop.

"Twenty year ago this very night, there was a party o' people went to a bean-feast up to Truro, and they chartered a special train to take 'em back 'ome to St. Blande down the line. That were the only night train as ever ran on these lines. Ted Holmes were kept on duty that night to close the bridge which were always left open night-time, for the clayboats to go out on the tide. It must 'ave been eleven o'clock when they 'phoned down from T'uro to shut the bridge as the special would soon be a-starting off. Ted answers as how he'd go and shut the bridge that moment, an' them were the last words he were ever 'eard to speak."

"What happened?" cried the little bride breathlessly.

"All in good time, Miss. As I were saying, Ted answers as how he'd go out and shut the bridge that moment, jest at eleven o'clock. He goes to the door, and there it was that illness comes to him, an' he falls down there on the platform jest outside that very door — dead!"

"Shocking!" came from Miss Bourne, and "How terrible!" murmured Peggy.

"And that bain't the worst of it, not near the worst, it bain't. As I were saying, jest at eleven o'clock Ted Holmes falls down dead. After 'twere all over, outside that very door they finds 'im, the lamp still burning in 'is 'and. It must 'ave been 'alf past eleven when the train starts off from T'uro, and 'ere be the bridge wide open and Ted Holmes a-lying dead on the platform. On comes the train down the valley at a fair lick, every one being anxious to get 'ome. On she comes, at thirty miles an hour, I reckons — poor Ben Izaacs were a-driving, and it did seem as though when 'e were jest above the station 'ere, something did warn 'im — what 'twere, the powers above alone know, but he claps on his brakes, and the train goes a-tearing through the station 'ere, all the brakes on, the whistles screamin' and then — crash!"

"Good Lord!"

"What an awful thing!"

"Were there many killed?"

"Six killed outright, an' two died after. By some miracle poor Ben Izaacs were thrown clear. He climbs out o' water and comes back 'ere to the station, 'is mind clean gone, an' they say 'e walked the platform 'ere for hours wavin' a red lamp and singin' 'Rock of Ages.' Next mornin' 'e died and 'twere a merciful release. Six bodies they brought up from the mud and laid out in this very room," he ended with solemn emphasis.

A silence followed the grim story.

"I warned 'ee 'tweren't no pretty tale you was making me tell," the station-master said as he prepared to leave.

"Yes," Murdoch remarked sceptically, "but where does the haunting come in?"

"Ever since that night, this station 'as been 'aunted."

"Who by? Ted Holmes?"

"More than that. Some nights the signal bell rings and a train comes a-screamin' and a-tearin' through the station with all the brakes on and whistles a-blowin'."

"Nonsense!" Winthrop jibed.

"'Tis God's truth, I'm tellin' yer, sir. One night, a while back, I were kept late by a thunderstorm, and jest as I gets down the road the signal

bell rings and then I 'eard 'er go through — I saw the flare from 'er furnace — saw it with me own eyes, sir!"

"I expect it's some freight train that's started this yarn."

"I tell ye there bain't no train runs on these metals from seven at night till seven in the morning. Besides which, it never starts from T'uro an' never runs into St. Blande. If it be a natural thing, where do it come from? Where do it go? Folk in these parts runs like mad if they 'ear a train in the night. They do say that to look upon the ghost train do mean — death."

Winthrop laughed outright.

"Now that's absolute rubbish!"

"Bide a bit, sir — bide a bit! A month ago a tramp breaks into this waiting-room one night, an' next mornin' they finds 'im 'ere dead. The doctors says as 'ow he died of fear."

"Pure coincidence."

"But that don't explain the train, sir. Dozens 'ave 'eard 'er tearin' down the line. No. You can stop here if you like, but not me. They do say as the dead do walk the platform and poor Ben Izaacs a-leading of 'em."

Deakin, who during this recital had been sitting

silent, now came forward with his irresponsible chuckle.

"I think this is all too perfectly priceless!" he exclaimed. "I never heard anything so delightfully funny in all my life."

"Funny?" Hodgkin glared. "So you make game of me, sir?"

"Don't get angry, old fruit," Deakin soothed. "Man to man, you know, it's rather tall."

"This is the last time," Miss Bourne vowed, "that I'll ever travel by this line. I never heard of anything so mismanaged. Isn't there any proper system of signalling?"

"It's only a single track, ma'am, and back when the accident happened the line was only just opened. Things is different now, and the swing bridge is never opened."

"What's the jolly old lever on the platform, then?" asked Deakin casually.

"That works the points to the siding as runs up the hill to the old tin mine," the station-master explained. He strode into the ticket-office and began to lock up the drawers; and Deakin went and sat by Miss Bourne, grinning fatuously as if he were extorting a tremendous amount of enjoyment out of the episode.

"Oh, cheer up, people," he said ingratiatingly. "It might be worse."

"That is all very well for you, young man," Miss Bourne informed him. "You have landed us into this most unpleasant situation and instead of expressing regret all you can do is to make fun of us. You are an ill-mannered young puppy, sir. My dear sister at Truro will be sitting up all night for me, and here am I in a cold railway station, with ghosts and things all over the place, and all you can do is to sit there and laugh. I will not stay in the same room with you." She seized the parrot-cage and sailed to the ticket-office door, then drew back shuddering, "Oh! Oh! I'm sure I saw something move in there!"

It was obvious that the party, especially the feminine members of it, was getting a little jumpy.

"Look here," Winthrop argued. "You'd better stay, station-master."

Hodgkin looked about him fearfully. "It's no good, sir, not a bit o' good. I won't stay 'ere no longer, not for a 'undred pounds I won't. I knows too much about this station."

"Can't you see you're alarming the ladies?"

"Bain't my fault, sir. I warned yer when yer first came that Fal Vale station was no pleasant place to pass the night. If you takes my advice

you'll set out for the farm even now. I've done me best, but I ain't going to risk no more. I've got a wife and childer lookin' to me."

"Very well," cried Murdoch, losing his temper, "go — and be damned to you — if you're afraid ——"

"Afraid? I am afraid, sir. I bain't ashamed to own it." He lighted his bicycle lamp as he spoke. "I'll be back 'ere at seven to-morrow to see you on to the train, and you take my advice, keep in 'ere; and if yer do 'ear a train, for God's sake don't go runnin' out to look at 'im. Good-night to you all."

"Good-night, and a pleasant ride, old chap. I hope you get jolly well soaked," was Deakin's parting shot.

"Thank you, sir. *Good*-night to you."

He went out, lamp in hand, and Deakin followed in his wake to open the door after him and call, "Kiss baby for me. Cheery old soul, that chap," he grinned.

"We'd better make arrangements for the night," Winthrop advised. "The ladies must sleep in here; it's drier than the ticket-office. The rain's coming through the roof there. Help me move this table, Deakin. Somebody may be able to rest on it."

They placed the table beneath the window, and arranged forms near the melancholy pretense at a

fire, collecting the travelling rugs of the combined party to form the bedding. Then they settled themselves to pass the night as comfortably as might be under the peculiar circumstances. The wind howled outside, the rain poured down in torrents. The bride and bridegroom dozed with their arms round each other, Miss Bourne hugged her parrot-cage, Deakin covered his face with a newspaper as he lay at full length on one of the hard forms; the obviously married couple kept sulkily apart. And so the time passed.

Suddenly they all started awake. Something had bumped heavily against the door.

"What's that?" cried Miss Bourne.

"Goodness knows!" Murdoch opened the door.

Lying on the platform just outside the door, his bicycle lamp in his hand, was the body of Saul Hodgkin, the station-master.

"What the deuce ——" Winthrop ran to the door and stooped over the figure; and suddenly Elsie Winthrop screamed.

"The lamp! Don't you remember? 'Outside the door they found him, *the lamp still burning in his hand.*'"

Murdoch took out his watch, then looked round at the ring of frightened faces.

"Eleven o'clock! Good God!"

# CHAPTER XXV

BETWEEN them the two men managed to lift the heavy body and to carry it into the ticket-office, where they laid it on the floor. For once, the irrepressible Deakin was silent. Even he seemed to feel that the occasion was scarcely one on which to give vent to a jest; and comment between the other two seemed useless. They carefully shut the door of the inner room on the body and returned to the waiting-room in silence. The occurrence had been so sudden, and had followed so immediately on the unfortunate Hodgkin's grim tale of the twenty-year-old tragedy and its strange sequel, that the shock of it had left them unable to think clearly or to reason the thing out carefully.

This night of all nights, he had said, nothing would induce him to remain in the neighbourhood of the haunted station and it seemed indeed as if, even in his flight from it, the mysterious menace had followed and struck him down. Yet it was impossible of belief: there must be some perfectly normal and reasonable solution — a heart attack, induced perhaps by fright — self-hypnotism resulting in

death — any cause rather than the absurd one they were asked to believe in.

They found the women huddled together, attempting to comfort each other, but obviously overcome by the uncanny events of the evening. Winthrop tried to calm them.

"Now, ladies, this is a nasty business, I know, and has given us a bit of a jar, but we must try not to take things too seriously," he reasoned.

Miss Bourne, on the verge of hysterics, cried: "Can't we go away somewhere?"

"That's quite a good idea," he returned, "but it's raining harder than ever — simply coming down in sheets. Besides which, there's nothing to be afraid of now. We've put that poor fellow in the other room and locked the door. Let's try and forget about it."

"Then you don't think his death had anything to do with the story he told us?" the little bride, whose face was white, murmured.

"My dear lady, dismiss it from your mind. Life is full of coincidences."

"It was a jolly strange one, though, wasn't it?" asked Deakin cheerfully. "It's just what he said happened — every detail!"

"Shut up, you idiot!" growled Murdoch. But Deakin was not to be so easily disposed of.

"That's all very well, old bean, but I suppose I'm entitled to my opinion the same as any one else?" he said pertly, screwing up his eyes and poking his face close to Murdoch's.

"You're not entitled to frighten people," declared the bridegroom, putting his arm about his wife.

"There was no such idea in my head. I was only thinking of a story I heard once of some people who spent the night in a haunted mill and just as the clock was striking midnight ——"

Winthrop said firmly, "I think that story will keep."

"All right, don't get shirty about it! After all, I don't believe in ghosts myself. I think this is all rather a scream. But still, on the other hand, so did those people who spent the night in the haunted mill. They saw a simply horrible ——"

"Look here, shut up!" cried Murdoch savagely.

"Oh, very well, I will," returned Deakin huffily. "Now you've properly done it. I shan't tell you the story at all." He went and sat down on the corner of the form, turning his back on the rest of the party.

"I feel perfectly sure," declared Miss Bourne solemnly, "there's some terrible supernatural force at work."

"Nonsense!" Winthrop assured her.

"That's what you said before, and yet look what happened. There were four men here — now there are only three."

There was a little silence.

"As I said just now, that was pure coincidence; it's no good worrying about it, Miss Bourne."

The flap of the ticket window suddenly fell with a sharp bang.

"Oh! Oh!" shrieked the women in chorus, starting to their feet.

"Only the ticket flap fell down. Nothing supernatural about that, anyway," said Winthrop, with what was meant to be a reassuring smile.

Deakin got up from his seat and came towards them, as if he had suddenly thought of a brilliant idea.

"That reminds me of something. Whatever is it? I know — Golder's Green!"

"I've never been on that station," said Murdoch shortly.

Deakin grinned. "Not the station, the Crematorium. Don't you know, they push the bodies——"

"Shut up!" the two other men shouted in chorus.

"I thought you'd like to hear about it. They only

push the bodies ——— " Deakin made an expressive movement with his hands.

" *Will* you shut up?"

" *Well!*" declared the irrepressible one. " You *are* a difficult crowd to entertain."

" Dear, oh dear!" wailed Miss Bourne. " What *shall* we do?"

" We must pull ourselves together, that's what we must do," said Winthrop gallantly.

" Don't you believe in ghosts, young man?" she queried tearfully.

" I don't believe in them and I don't disbelieve in them. But that's quite beside the point. Nothing of a supernatural nature has happened here."

" But it might! Suppose that train should come, what should we do?"

" I say," interposed Deakin hopefully, " if the ghost train comes, I bags we stop it and try and get a lift."

The two others regarded him in silent disgust. Nothing seemed to stop the young fool from trying to frighten the women even more severely than they were already.

But it was Peggy who tried to soothe Miss Bourne.

" Come, Miss Bourne, there's nothing to be

frightened about. There's no danger really, you know."

"I feel so ill," said Miss Bourne weakly. "I'm sure I'm going to faint."

Deakin pulled a flask from his pocket. "I say, I've just had a brain wave. I forgot all about this. Brandy. The very thing. Have some of this, Miss Bourne."

"Oh, dear me, no," cried that lady protestingly, "I couldn't think of such a thing — I'm a strict teetotaler."

"But this is different, Miss Bourne. You should have a little just as medicine. It would do you good," urged Winthrop, taking the flask from the other's hand.

"Well, just a spot," agreed Miss Bourne, faintly. She took the flask and drank a little, spluttering. "Ah! Ugh! Now I've broken my pledge. Dear me, it's hardly as nasty as I imagined."

"I should have a little more," encouraged Winthrop.

"Do you think I ought? Then just a sip ——" she raised the flask and drank again.

"Feel better now?" asked Peggy sympathetically, after a moment.

"I think I do feel a little better," agreed Miss

Bourne, and handed the flask back to Winthrop, who passed it to Deakin.

"Crumbs!" cried Deakin, regarding the flask in amazement.

"What's up now?" cried Murdoch testily.

"Look at my beastly flask. It's empty!" And he turned it upside down. "It was full just now — full to the rotten brim."

"Phew!" said Winthrop. They all turned to look at Miss Bourne. "Well, it won't do her any harm."

"Well, it won't do me any good," remarked the aggrieved Deakin.

Miss Bourne was beaming on the company. She began to prattle, "D'you know, it's a strange thing, but in spite of all these terrible happenings I'm beginning to feel quite happy?"

"Good Lord!" whispered Murdoch in horrified amusement. "Miss Bourne, wouldn't you like to lie down?"

"Lie down? Why?" asked Miss Bourne.

"We thought perhaps you would be more comfortable," Peggy suggested tactfully.

"I'm perfectly comfortable, m'dear." She leaned her head against Murdoch's shoulder. "'Straordinary good medicine, my dear. Shall

most certainly recommend it to the Vicar. Made me feel quite sleepy. Just the thing for the Vicar — he suffers dreadfully from insom — insom — sleeplessness. Dear me! Well, perhaps you're right. I think after all I *will* lie down."

Murdoch and Winthrop led her gently to the table beneath the window, and hoisted her carefully upon it, covering her with rugs and folding up coats to form a pillow for her head. Miss Bourne acquiesced gracefully and immediately fell fast asleep. Murdoch turned to Winthrop with a gleam of amusement in his eyes.

"That was rather funny, her getting squiffy as easily as that," he remarked.

"My dear chap, she emptied the flask! Perhaps it's just as well for the poor soul. She's gone to sleep now and may not wake up until it's light," Winthrop replied.

"It's damned hard lines on me, though," said Deakin, still aggrieved. "I didn't reckon on her swigging the whole issue."

"Don't be a fool, Deakin. It's worth it, to keep her quiet, and ——" Murdoch's words were cut off abruptly.

There suddenly sounded above the thunder of the rain on the roof, a hurried knocking at the door. All five turned towards it, and for a moment there

was a paralysed silence. The knocking was repeated more urgently, and after a second Murdoch started towards the door. But Peggy clung to him.

"Don't go! Wait! You don't know who it may be — *what* it may be!" she whispered in a panic-stricken voice.

"Then I must find out," he answered resolutely, and, disengaging himself gently from the little bride's arms, he strode forward and opened the door.

It was Julia who stood there. Julia Price, her grey eyes wide with fear, her grey cloak soaked with rain. She stood a moment without speaking, but looking from one face to the next dazedly. It seemed to Murdoch that her glance rested for one short moment of recognition upon Deakin, before it passed on to the others, as she entered, closed the door and leaned her weight against it, as if to keep out something beside the dark and the rain. Then she started forward with an imploring gesture, and cried:

"Tell me, has it come?"

"I beg your pardon?" asked Murdoch, puzzled.

"Has it come?" she repeated wildly.

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow you."

"You know! You *must* know."

"I'm afraid we don't." Murdoch made an enquiring gesture towards the others.

"Listen to me," she whispered. "I want you to help me. Will you help me?"

"Of course, but what exactly is the matter?"

"Hide me from them. Hide me — please!" she implored.

"Yes, but hide you from whom?"

"From *them*."

"But — er — who are they?" asked Winthrop, puzzled.

"You must help me," she repeated. "Don't let them take me back. I can't go back. I can't!"

Outside the door, a voice was heard in the distance, calling:

"Julia! Julia!"

"There they are. What shall I do? They'll find me. They'll take me back again. Help me!" she cried frantically.

"It's all right," Murdoch assured her. "We won't let anyone hurt you."

"Then let me hide — in here ——" she made a movement towards the ticket-office, but Winthrop barred the way.

"No! No! Not in there!" he pushed her gently away from the door.

The voice outside was coming nearer.

"Julia! Julia!"

"They're coming, I tell you!" She tried to break from his grasp.

"It's all right," Peggy added her assurance.

"It's not all right ——" Julia darted behind the door as two men entered.

One was an elderly, clean-shaven man; the other, tall, thin and forbidding looking. They appeared very much astonished to have come suddenly upon the little party in the waiting-room, and both stopped on the threshold.

"Hello! Who the devil are you people?" cried one.

"That's just what I was going to ask you," Winthrop retorted.

"We've come here on a very urgent matter," the elderly man explained.

"And we," returned Winthrop, "are here purely by the force of circumstance. I suppose you're surprised to find us here at this time of the night?"

"We're most certainly not here by choice," put in Murdoch. "We lost a connection and have to wait here until the next train."

"But there isn't any next train," the thin man informed him, and added, with a sinister note in his voice: "You know what place this is?"

"Rather!" said Deakin. "This is Fal Vale station."

"Quite so." The thin man spoke drily.

"And now, perhaps," asked Winthrop, a little nettled by the other's tone, "you'll give us some explanation of *your* somewhat unexpected entrance?"

"Oh, yes. My name's Price. This is Doctor Sterling. We're looking for my sister."

"Your sister?" Deakin seemed interested.

"Yes. Have you seen a young lady about here? We have every reason to believe that she would come to this place."

"Then she's run away from you?" Winthrop queried cautiously.

"In a way, yes." Price spoke rather reluctantly. "Have you seen her?"

"But why should she run away? Why should she come here?" demanded Murdoch.

"That," returned Price pompously, "is not a matter that I wish to discuss with strangers."

"Very well. In that case I'm afraid we can't help you."

"She's here somewhere, Price; I know that," impatiently put in the man introduced as Doctor Sterling. "Look in the other room."

Price moved towards the door of the ticket-office, but Winthrop once again barred the way.

"Stop! You can't go in there — not yet!" he warned.

"And why not, sir?" Price drew himself up, indignantly.

"Because — because there's something we must explain ——"

"So she *is* in there?" He made a swift movement towards the inner room.

"No!"

Price was not to be gainsaid, however.

"I'm sorry," he remarked, "but I don't believe you. You're doing a very foolish thing to interfere in this matter."

"She's not there!" asserted Winthrop. "I give you my word of honour."

"It's not good enough. Shut that door, Sterling! I mean to get to the bottom of this."

Sterling shut the outer door, and by so doing disclosed Julia, who had been crouching terror-stricken behind it.

"Hello! So there you are, Julia!"

The girl stood before them, wringing her hands and crying: "I can't come back — you know I can't!"

"Come along, Julia." The doctor laid a hand on her arm, soothingly. "Let's get out of here while the rain holds off."

"No, no, I can't. I must stay here, I can't go." She tore away from him. "Don't touch me! Go away!"

"Damn it all," said Price savagely. "If she won't come, we must take her."

Julia ran to Winthrop's side, obviously under the spell of some horrid fear, and he put an arm round her shoulders.

"Excuse me, but this lady has put herself under our protection. You're not going to take her away against her will," he declared hotly.

"Mind your own business, sir!" cried Price sharply.

"It is our business," Murdoch announced.

The doctor intervened, trying to pour oil on the troubled waters.

"You'd better explain to them, Price. It's no good trying to ride roughshod in this matter. Come, Julia, let's sit down by the fire." He took her hand as if he were encouraging a child, and she did not resist when he led her to a chair.

"Now then," said Price authoritatively, "listen to me, please. You people have heard the story about this place, I suppose?"

"We've heard the ghost story," replied Murdoch. "All about this station being haunted; that's the one, I suppose?"

"Yes. Please don't let my sister worry you; she's — well, she suffers from — er — well — er — delusions at times. No, hardly that," in answer to an expressive look from Winthrop. "It's all this infernal ghost train business. She was near this station one night several years ago, and she thought she saw the train."

Julia cried wildly: "I did see it — you know I saw it — I did see it!"

"There, there, Julia!" the doctor soothed.

"You see," went on Price, "she's Cornish and believes in ghosts. She always has done, ever since she was a kiddie. I sometimes feel there's something psychic about her. Anyway, she thought she saw this ghost train and it was a great shock to her. So great a shock that it — well — er — upset her permanently. She's perfectly well most of the time, but some nights she has this idea that the ghost train will run and it has a morbid fascination for her. She feels that she must see it again. This is one of her bad nights. Now I hope you understand."

"It will come to-night," Julia declared. "I know it will."

"Nonsense, Julia."

"It's not nonsense, I know it. I feel it. I'm never wrong. That night the tramp died — I felt it then!"

Price shrugged his shoulders. "There you are, you see. Don't let it alarm you. How did you get to know this story?"

"The station-master told us the yarn earlier in the evening."

"Oh, old Saul Hodgkin. Where is he, by the way?" asked Sterling carelessly.

Winthrop looked at Murdoch. "Something rather strange has happened here to-night. Something rather unpleasant. We should like you to know about it," he said.

Price eyed him narrowly. "Well?"

"The old boy," resumed Winthrop, "didn't want us to put up for the night at this place; he didn't think it was safe. He told us the whole story and then he said he should go home. He took his cycle lamp, lit it and went off. Then we heard a noise, and when we opened the door we found him lying outside — dead."

"Good God!" cried Price tensely.

"I knew it!" cried the girl. "What did I tell you? Now perhaps you'll believe me."

"You think that there's some supernatural force at work?" the little bride plucked up courage to ask timidly.

"Yes," said Julia, and added vehemently:

"Why, that's where they found poor Ted Holmes, lying outside the door."

"Steady, Julia. I'm a doctor, ladies and gentlemen," explained Sterling. "Where is this poor chap? Let me see him."

"We carried him into the ticket-office," said Murdoch and Winthrop in one breath.

"All right. I'll go and examine him." The doctor crossed to the inner door, opened it and disappeared.

"You see," said Murdoch, "it was a nasty business and gave us a shock."

"Of course," Price agreed; then turned again to the girl. "Come Julia, it's time to be off."

"No, no. I *must* stay. Everything is bearing me out; the train won't let me go!" she averred.

Winthrop tried to calm her excited nerves.

"There's a lot of difference between the coincidence of two men falling dead and a phantom train," he said.

"But the death of Ted Holmes was the beginning of it all, twenty years ago to-night," cried Julia.

At this moment, Sterling re-entered from the ticket-office. He crossed to Winthrop and made a menacing gesture.

"Here, I say, what's the joke?" he exploded.

"Eh?" Winthrop was taken by surprise.

"It's on us all right, although under the circumstances it's rather out of place. Where do we laugh?" demanded Sterling. "Didn't you tell us that Saul Hodgkin dropped dead?"

"Yes. We carried him in there. What's up?"

"Go and look."

"What the deuce ——?" Winthrop went over to the ticket-office and, after a moment, returned to the waiting-room again.

"Why — " he cried, "he — he isn't there!"

## CHAPTER XXVI

THE three men glared at each other in dead silence, before Murdoch pushed his way past the others and peered through the door of the inner room. Then he, too, drew back with a startled exclamation:

"Good God — it's true, he's gone!"

"But we all saw him!" cried Peggy trembling.

Julia screamed suddenly. "I know — I know! Don't you see it? Don't you see it was Ted Holmes, not Saul Hodgkin at all? Ted Holmes was a tall man with a beard, they say. It wasn't Saul Hodgkin you found outside the door — it was Ted Holmes!"

Mrs. Winthrop hid her face in her hands. "It couldn't have been — it couldn't have been!"

But Julia turned to her and cried, "If it *was* Saul Hodgkin, where is he now? And the time when all this happened — it was at eleven o'clock. I know it; it *was* Ted Holmes."

Price turned to the doctor in apparent desperation.

"We've got to get her out of here somehow, even if we have to use force. Come along, now,

Julia." He spoke angrily, and the girl shrank away from him.

"I can't come!" she whispered. "I'm going to stop here. You're trying to drive me mad. You know as well as I do that the train will come, and you pretend that it's my delusion. I know all about it; you want to put me away just as you did before — you're trying to get me put away. I won't stir from here, however frightened I am. You can kill me but I won't go!"

She eluded his grasp and placed herself near to Deakin, who all the time had been standing silent.

Price followed her angrily. "Enough of this, Julia," he said curtly.

"Don't touch me. Go away! Go away!" the girl screamed.

"Damn it all, I ——"

"Steady, Price," advised Doctor Sterling. "Listen to me. Why can't you humour her a little? She'll be as right as rain by the morning. Why don't you clear off and leave her to me? I can manage her better; you seem to excite her. I'll get her away, I think, and if not, let her stay here. The train won't come, and that may put an end to these attacks of hers. It's worth thinking about, at any rate."

Price shrugged his shoulders. "As you please."

He turned to the girl. "I'm going, Julia. I'm hanged if I'm going to mess about here all night. Good night, all." And without further ado he went out and banged the door after him.

Julia asked more quietly after a slight pause, "Where's he gone?"

"He's gone home," returned the doctor. "You have a little rest and then we'll all go."

All her fears seemed to return on her. "No, I'm going to stay here," she insisted.

He humoured her. "Very well, Julia — just as you like."

"But it isn't as I like," she declared despairingly. "It's because I've got to. The place terrifies me. This room is full of evil."

The doctor seized his advantage and said eagerly: "Yes, Julia, yes — why not come away from it?"

"Why do you keep saying that? Why are you so cruel? You know I'd go if I could. Why won't any of you help me?"

Persuasion, they saw, was useless; all opposition seemed to increase the girl's determination, and presently the doctor gave up his entreaties. He turned and addressed the others.

"Everything considered, ladies and gentlemen, I really think it would be better for you people to

follow Mr. Price's example and clear out. It's only about five miles to the farm. I think it would be better to risk a wetting than — well, to bring on any further unpleasant experiences."

"Yes, yes, let's go, Charlie," the little bride cried fervently.

"I think it would be better to go. I'm not nervous, of course, but this room is very uncomfortable," Mrs. Winthrop agreed.

"Very well, we'll go," said Winthrop. "It can't be more deuced unpleasant anywhere than it is here."

There was a general movement to the door.

"But I say, old thing, just one fleeting moment!" The words came from Deakin, who had taken no part in the conversation hitherto.

"Well?" They halted.

"How about the Countess?" Deakin gestured towards the sleeping form of Miss Bourne on the table.

"This lady is one of our party," Winthrop explained to Doctor Sterling. "She became rather faint and we persuaded her into taking a little brandy. Something distracted our attention from her and she — er ——"

Deakin broke in, screwing his face into a grimace.

"She put away the lot at one fell swoop."

"It puts us in rather a quandary, doesn't it?" Winthrop said.

"Then leave this lady with us," the doctor remarked promptly. "It's the only way out. I'd advise you to get off before the rain comes on again."

The men picked up the wraps and attaché cases, and another move was made towards the exit. The waiting-room had become such an extremely unpopular place that even a five-mile walk over an unknown Cornish road in the middle of the night was an agreeable prospect by comparison. Then Deakin announced with his usual fatuous grin, trotting after them:

"I've got a simply topping idea. Listen! It's started raining again, and I'm not going to walk five miles in the rotten rain for any ghost. I'll stay here as well and help look after Miss Bourne. I think she rather likes me; at least, she ought to after bagging all my brandy."

"You go with the others," advised the doctor. "There's no reason for you to remain here."

A sudden gust of wind drove the rain, which had begun to fall again, against the windows; and they hesitated.

"I think we'd better all stay. What do you say,

Elsie?" asked Winthrop dubiously. "The weather's simply appalling and we can't very well leave the old lady." He dropped the suitcases he was carrying.

"Shall we stick it out, Pegs?" Murdoch asked his little wife, and she replied bravely enough:

"I'm game."

The doctor looked at them. "In my opinion you're very unwise," he said harshly. "You'd much better get off while you can."

"*I* think," remarked Deakin with a grin, "this affair is jolly sporting."

"It would be very much better to take the ladies away," Sterling urged; and then Julia's voice was heard as if speaking to herself:

"They say that when it comes you hear the bell ringing dismally, frightfully. I wonder if the bell will ring to-night. Just listen — drip, drip, drip! Ah! This was the room where they brought those dead people. . . . It's coming, I tell you; it will be here soon. I can feel it!" She shuddered violently.

"Julia! Julia!" remonstrated the doctor.

It was at this moment, while attention was concentrated on Julia, that Deakin drew Murdoch aside and handed something to him that he pulled from his pocket.

"I want you to hold this," he whispered. "Don't show it to any one. Put it in your pocket. Now, do you understand?"

Murdoch looked mystified, but he pocketed the article, at the same time declaring emphatically, "No, I don't."

Deakin chuckled. "Of course not; neither do I. Dashed funny, isn't it? Look here, I can depend on you to back me up, can't I? If anything unpleasant happens, you'll all be guided by me, won't you?"

Murdoch couldn't help smiling. "You're a fine chap to put yourself at the head of the party, aren't you?" he said, with a tolerant sneer.

"Don't you think so, old bean?"

"I'm hanged if I do."

"But you'll do as I tell you?"

"I shall use my own discretion," Murdoch answered coolly, and murmured to his wife, "Colossal cheek of the young pup's!"

Julia, at the other side of the room, was speaking again, always in that half-tranced voice:

"Just as it all happened before; the whistle, the scream of the brakes, the shriek of the whistle, louder, louder, louder! So loud that the noise nearly kills one. It's awful, awful! And I have to see it again; and if I see it again I may die."

"Then come away," the doctor urged, taking her arm and attempting to draw her towards the door.

"No, no. It won't let me; it keeps me here! Why don't you all go away and leave me? When the train comes ——" she stopped suddenly and listened.

"The train *can't* come," declared Winthrop; but Sterling said slowly, as if he were being convinced against his will:

"We ought to be prepared. I'm not a believer in ghost stories, however damning the evidence, but I must confess that this is a jolly queer business."

"If the train *comes*, I'll believe the yarn," returned Winthrop. "People can't mess about with railway trains, that's pretty certain."

"The tearing of the brakes," muttered Julia. "Grinding and rasping — the shriek of the whistle — and a dead man lying on the platform. The roar, louder and louder — and then — into the river below — crash! Don't you hear it? Why don't you go? There's still time ——" and again she stopped short and listened intently.

Away in the distance a sound rose above the shriek of the wind — the sound of a signal bell ringing in melancholy fashion.

Julia cried: "The bell! The bell! You heard

it? Now will you believe me?" She turned on them and flung out her hands: "The bell! The signal bell! It always rings."

"But hang it all," cried Winthrop aghast, "this is the twentieth century!" He stared at the strained faces of the others.

Peggy clutched Murdoch's hand. "What was that? I thought I heard a train whistle."

"It's coming! It's coming!" breathed Julia.

Deakin made for the door, crying, "Let's go and see."

"No, no. Stop!" commanded Julia. The whistle of a train was distinctly heard in the distance.

"By gosh! She's right!" muttered Winthrop. "A train. Don't you hear it? There — again!"

"Yes, yes, I knew it!" Julia declared mournfully. "It's coming! It's coming! Thundering down the valley! It's coming! On! On! On!"

"I'm going to see it." Deakin seized the door handle and pulled the door. "It's stuck."

Winthrop went to him and they pulled frantically at the door.

"It's bolted or fastened somehow ——"

Murdoch dashed to the ticket office door and tried it.

"This one's locked too! We're shut in," he called.

"Impossible!"

"We are, I tell you. We're shut in!"

They stood motionless, staring, waiting, while the noise of the approaching train increased every second.

"Listen to it! Listen to it! I've got to see it. I must see it. I must!" cried Julia frantically, running towards the window.

"Hold her, some one!" shouted Sterling, seizing her; but she broke from him, screaming.

"Let me go! Let me go!"

She jumped on the table with one bound, seized the water-bottle and smashed it through one of the upper panes of the window, as the train with a deafening roar dashed through the station with the whistle shrieking furiously, and with lights flashing past. A cloud of steam billowed into the room from the broken window, and the girl, with a piercing shriek, fell from the table and crumpled to the floor in a heap.

# CHAPTER XXVII

The fury of the gale seemed to have spent itself with the hurricane of sound that accompanied the rushing of the train through the Fal Vale station; and now all was quiet, quiet as the figure of the girl who lay so terribly still, covered with her grey cloak, upon two forms they had dragged together side by side.

The male passengers grouped themselves together by the fireplace and talked in hushed whispers — the two women clung together, Mrs. Winthrop crying quietly, completely unnerved despite the brave front she had hitherto maintained. Miss Bourne still lay asleep upon the table blissfully unconscious of the weird happenings.

Doctor Sterling was sitting by Julia, bending over her. For nearly an hour she had remained unconscious. Deakin trotted over with an elaborate pretense of tip-toeing, and screwing his eyeglass tighter into his eye, stooped over her too.

"Flummoxed, eh?" he asked, speaking to the doctor in a low whisper. "You're sure she's not dead?"

"Oh, no, she's not dead. Her heart beat is

faint but pretty steady," the doctor answered in the same tone.

"Haven't you got one of those what-you-call-'ems — listening-in jiggers?" asked the bright boy, as if a brilliant and somewhat unusual idea had just occurred to him.

The doctor eyed him coldly. "Stethoscope, you mean? Of course not. I've got none of my instruments with me. She's had these strange turns before, but they've never ended like this." He took her wrist to feel the pulse.

Winthrop joined the two. "I can't understand it," he said, puzzled. "The train *did* come right enough: we can't get away from that."

"Yes, it all bears out the story of the ghost train," Sterling said slowly. "Any one who sees it, dies."

"But she's *not* dead, my dear old thing," Deakin protested.

"Not yet. She's very ill."

"It seems as if this train doesn't like being looked at," suggested Deakin with a winning smile. No one bothered to answer, and there was another prolonged silence. Then Sterling rose.

"It's no good puzzling about this business, ladies and gentlemen. We're up against something too big for us."

"You really think ——" Peggy ventured and broke off.

Sterling paused a moment before replying, as if at a loss.

"I see no other explanation. When I came here to-night, I thought the legend about this place just a silly local yarn. One must take the facts into consideration, though, and they can't be explained away. If it *was* old Saul you found outside the door, how did his body get out of the ticket office? There's no window but the skylight."

"If only she had told us something more before she fell," Winthrop muttered. "I say, look!"

The others flashed round.

"I thought I saw her move," Winthrop hesitated.

Julia moved an arm, and the doctor bent over her again.

"By Jove, you're right. Better?"

Julia sighed faintly. "Splendid!"

Julia moved again, then attempted to sit up, aided by Sterling, who put a supporting arm round her. She stared about her for a moment, then said weakly: "What am I doing here?"

"It's all right, you fainted or something — you're better now," the doctor encouraged her.

"How my head aches!" she murmured. "What

is the matter with me? Oh, my head! I don't seem able to remember anything. . . . Yes, I do. It was the train! I thought it would come to-night." Suddenly she flung off the covering and started to her feet. "Ah!"

"Be calm, Julia," Sterling soothed her. "Let's see if we can piece things together a little, now that you're better. Sit down again."

The girl mechanically obeyed. "It's all coming back to me — everything's perfectly clear. Oh, yes, yes! It wasn't my imagination! We heard the signal bell — yes, I remember now; we heard the train in the distance. I jumped on the table and then — and then — then I suppose I fainted. Then the train *did* come?"

"Yes, that was it," acquiesced Winthrop.

"And none of you saw it?" she asked eagerly.

"Only you. The doors were fastened — we couldn't get out," Murdoch reminded her. "You broke a window and looked out."

"We can't get out now. Jolly thrilling, isn't it?" grinned Deakin, who was the only one whose spirits were not entirely extinguished by the night's events.

"It's awful! What can we do? What can we do?" moaned Julia.

Sterling answered resolutely, "We must all get

away from here — if we can, as quickly as possible."

Julia's eyes were staring fascinated at the window. "Look! Look!" she cried, pointing.

All eyes followed the pointing finger. Through the opaque bottom pane of the window, a glimmer of a red lamp was seen, passing by as though carried by some one walking along the platform.

"A red lamp! There's some one outside." Deakin went towards the door but was peremptorily recalled by Sterling's voice, crying:

"Stop!"

"What's up?" said Deakin, turning.

"Have you forgotten the rest of the story? Who do you think that is out there?"

"Some one to open the beastly door, I hope."

"Suppose," said Julia shrinking, "suppose it's Ben Izaacs?"

"Yes," agreed Deakin naïvely, and then, puzzled, "Who the devil's he?"

"Don't you remember the rest of the story? How Ben Izaacs, the driver, went mad?"

There came a knock on the door.

"Who's there? Come in!" called Winthrop, but his wife thrust her way to him, begging in an agitated whisper:

"Don't let it!"

"We must get to the bottom of this, Elsie."

Five more consecutive knocks were heard at the door, slowly and deliberately; and Deakin picked up a chair and swung it.

"I'll settle this," he said.

"No, no! Don't let it in! Don't!" Julia begged.

Deakin dropped the chair and there was a strained silence followed by a general relaxation as Sterling's voice was heard:

"It's gone, whoever it is!" and Winthrop added, turning to the others:

"Well, this caps the lot!"

"If it had been a man," said Peggy, "he would have answered. How many times did he knock? Six, was it? Oh! I've just remembered something — no, I might be wrong."

"But we ought to know."

"It's too horrible. I won't say it."

"Come along, Peggy — out with it!" Murdoch said.

"It's just this." The voice of the little bride was solemn. "There were six knockings at the door. The old station-master said there were six people killed. Six dead bodies they brought up from the mud and laid out in this very room." She shuddered and hid her face on her husband's shoulder.

"I don't think that's got anything to do with it. We've no proof of it," Winthrop remarked. "We've no proof of anything, for that matter. There's that lamp again!"

Outside, a chuckle of insane laughter sounded, and then a voice began to sing:

"Rock of Ages cleft for me
Let me hide myself in Thee."

and gave way to another peal of maniacal laughter.

"It *is* Ben Izaacs!" Sterling pronounced grimly.

The others were dumfounded.

"Yes! Yes! Yes! Oh, this is awful! What can we do? I can't stand it. I can't, I can't!" Julia declared. "There it is again!" She screamed. "He's trying to get in."

"What can we do? What can any one do?" whispered Peggy in a horror-struck voice.

"That's just it," said Murdoch, "what can we do? And yet, something must be done, or these women will go mad."

Winthrop mopped his brow with a pocket handkerchief.

"God! We'll all go mad if this goes on much longer."

"We must get away at all costs," Sterling said. "Do you feel well enough to walk, Julia?"

"Yes, I think so. I'll do anything if only we can get away," Julia breathed faintly.

He put the cloak about her shoulders. "Then let's get out of here as soon as possible."

"Where can we go?" asked Murdoch.

"Anywhere. There should be shelter in a shed or a barn somewhere about. Anything is better than this."

Once more they prepared to leave the waiting-room, but once more they were arrested by Deakin's cheerful voice:

"But, my dear old things, you've forgotten something."

"Eh? What's that?" Winthrop halted to say.

"We're fastened in, aren't we? We jolly well can't get out."

"Where there's a will there's a way. We can break down the door," Sterling said.

"And then we shall have to pay for the damage; we've broken a beastly window as it is," expostulated Deakin.

Winthrop regarded him blankly. "Well, I'm damned! If you aren't the absolute limit! I never in all my life. You ——" words failed him completely.

"And there's another thing too! The ladies were quite right just now. If we break down the

door we shall let in that chap outside." Deakin peered up ingratiatingly at his listeners.

"Yes. Don't open the door, whatever you do," came from Elsie.

"Now look here, Elsie," said Winthrop in exasperation. "Just listen to me, Mrs. Murdoch. If it's a man outside, it's quite safe, we're four to one; if it's not a man — if it's *not* a man, no locked door will keep it out; do you follow me?" He went to both doors and tried them. "They're still fastened, both of them. We'll break this one down." He lifted one of the benches, and was about to heave it at the outer door, when the gas began to fade gradually.

"Wait! There it is again!" Julia broke in faintly.

Another insane peal of laughter rang out from the unseen voice outside the room.

"We shall have to face it. It's madness if we stay here," declared Winthrop. "Good God! The light is going out! There's some devil's work here."

The gas suddenly flickered out, leaving the place in pitch darkness.

Deakin flashed a torch about the room. "Every one all right?" he called cheerfully. "Phew! There's a smell of gas. I believe it's on again. Strike a match, some one."

Murdoch struck a match and relit the gas. "So it is."

"Oh, look at that!" Julia whispered. They all turned.

"Why, the doors are open!"

"Come along, let's clear out," Sterling said, and led Julia to the open door.

"Wait a moment," warned Deakin. "The Countess."

"Just a second," said Winthrop. "We must make some arrangement about Miss Bourne." He went to the door and looked out into the darkness. "We'd better get ready to bolt for it."

"Now, *please* ——" interposed Deakin, and Winthrop whirled on him savagely.

"What, are you starting again?"

"I want you all to listen to me and take my advice," Deakin remarked jovially. "I bags that none of us go, eh? Let's all stay here."

"Stay here? Good Lord! Don't listen to the fool. Stay here, indeed!" Sterling exploded. "When we're in great danger; up against some devilish thing? If we stay, God knows what may happen to us. It was different when the doors were fastened; we had no choice in the matter then. Now it's up to us to take the opportunity and bolt."

"Well, you go," agreed Deakin, heartily. "I'll

stay and look after Miss Bourne. You'll do the old girl in, digging her out at this hour, especially after the binge she was on."

"I don't follow you," said Murdoch, impatiently.

"It's quite easy. I'll stay here with Miss Bourne. She'll be all right. She won't wake till morning — that brandy of mine was pre-war. You see, I'm just as much afraid as any of you — I'm very nearly scared to pulp; but there's a world of difference between being afraid and running away. What would my people say if they knew that I'd been running about all night, grinning like a dog and getting my trousers muddy out of pure funk?"

"We've simply got to go," said Sterling angrily.

"Very well, I'm not stopping you, am I? You can all go and take the ladies with you. I'll stay here with Miss Bourne; or you take Miss Bourne with you and may the marriage bells ring out right merrily!"

"We all go, eh?" Sterling said. "All go together!"

"*You* all go. I stay," repeated Deakin obstinately.

"It's not safe, you fool — once and for all, you're not going to stay here alone."

"Steady on, doctor," Murdoch put in. "I suppose the fellow has a right to please himself, however great a fool he is."

"Thank you, kind sir." Deakin beamed on him. "Now I put it to you, old bean. Will you stay with me?"

"Easy on," said Murdoch. "It's — it's like this — I have my wife to consider."

"Oh, quite," agreed Deakin. "Very well, I'll stay alone. Trot along."

"Why have you made up your mind to stop here?" asked Sterling suspiciously.

"I want to see what happens next," answered Deakin guilelessly.

"And do you mean to say you'll risk your life and reason for that?" The doctor appealed to the rest of the party. "The chap's gone mad. It's our duty to take him away with us."

"No, you don't," Deakin declared equably. "I'm going to jolly well wait here and see that train come back." He sat down on one of the forms. "The train that went through an hour ago, you know."

"It won't come back," protested Sterling. "There's nothing in the story to suggest it. And if it did come back, it might mean death to all of us. This train has a supernatural origin, you fool."

"Has it?" asked Deakin agreeably.

"Do you doubt it, then?"

"To be perfectly candid, I do. Anyway, I'm going to wait and see." Even as he spoke, the red lamp appeared again at the window and a second later, the figure of an old man with a dead white face and a driver's cap pulled down over his eyes passed the open door bearing a lamp in his hand. In the darkness outside nothing was very distinct as the wraith-like figure passed on.

"Now perhaps you're satisfied," cried Sterling grimly.

"I'm damned if I am!"

With that cry a remarkable thing happened. Edward Deakin's whole manner changed. The eye-glass fell from his eye, his weedy figure straightened, his high-pitched voice vanished, giving place to one of authoritative command, and he whipped a revolver from his pocket as he sprang into the centre of the room and fired at the passing figure outside. "Now for it," he shouted. "Hold that!"

The figure vanished, dropping the lamp in its flight, and Deakin rushed outside and picked it up.

"Ghost or no ghost, I've winged him, and that's that." He pointed to the platform. "Look! Blood!"

## CHAPTER XXVIII

STERLING, watching in frozen astonishment, cried in a panic: "What have you done?"

"You'll soon see," Deakin replied with grim purposefulness. "Listen! Do you hear? That's the train again."

In the distance a faint rumbling heralded the approach of a locomotive.

"Oh! Oh! It's coming back," whispered Peggy.

Deakin's quick, alert glance darted from one face to the other. "Yes, it's coming back all right, but don't worry. I've got this in hand. I've laid one ghost already, and now I'm going to switch that ghost train onto the siding." He took a step back to the door but Sterling tried to intercept him with a hoarse cry.

"Stop! Stop!"

Deakin turned on Sterling and threatened him with his revolver. "Get back! Up with your hands!" he commanded sternly, and the doctor obeyed. "Where are you, Murdoch?"

"Here." Murdoch came forward.

"Where's that revolver I gave you?"

"I've got it." Murdoch felt in his pocket and

drew out the pistol Deakin had handed him an hour ago.

"Then watch this devil till I come back."

The rumbling of the approaching train grew louder as Deakin dashed onto the platform once more. The sound of three shots outside followed in quick succession and then the noise of the train diminished till it died away altogether.

"I've done it! We've got her onto the siding," Deakin exclaimed as he reappeared.

"Look here ——" growled the discomfited Sterling, but Deakin interrupted him ruthlessly.

"It's no good, the game's up."

"Do you mean," said Winthrop, as the truth dawned on him, "that we've been had? That there's no ghost train?"

"I do," Deakin returned drily. "These people are at the bottom of it. That train is as real as the Plymouth express."

"I tell you ——" expostulated Sterling fiercely, but once again Deakin broke in with an abrupt, "Shut up!"

"But what's their game?" cried the mystified Murdoch.

"I'm not sure yet, but we'll soon know. Ah! here we are."

There was a sound of footsteps outside, and

as he spoke two men entered the doorway and stood there, apparently being driven from behind. The first was the apparition who had so recently appeared. His hand, which was clasped round the wrist of the other arm, was covered with blood. The other was the station-master, Saul Hodgkin. Behind them came a burly man with rolling eyes and a grey moustache followed by two policemen in plain clothes.

"What the deuce!" cried Winthrop, and Murdoch added in unmitigated astonishment, "Why, here's our old friend Saul!"

Deakin smiled. "Yes, he got you all with that sham dead trick of his, and a clever little exit from the ticket office I discovered when I examined this station a month ago. You were all too panicked to spot it. Got 'em all, Jackson?"

Jackson beamed. "Yes, sir, I think so."

"Who's this chap?" Deakin approached the apparition and tweaked off his white wig and beard. "Hello! I thought it was you I winged, Price. Hurt you much?"

Price growled. "You put a bullet right through my arm, damn you!"

"Thank your lucky stars it wasn't right through your head, damn you!" Deakin retorted sharply.

Peggy put a timid little hand on Deakin's.

"Hadn't the doctor better see to his arm?" she whispered.

"Doctor? What doctor?" asked Deakin.

"Why, Doctor Sterling."

Deakin smiled. "He's no more a doctor than you are, Mrs. Murdoch. Didn't you see him take Miss Price's pulse with his thumb?"

Sterling turned furiously upon him. "Who the hell *are* you?"

This was Jackson's big moment. He stepped forward, his chest swelling with pride and importance as he made his statement.

"Why, haven't you tumbled to him yet? That's Captain Edward Morrison of the Secret Service!"

"Not," said Winthrop, "the Morrison who pulled that big stunt off at Cologne?"

Teddie grinned again. "Quite. You all had rather a down on me, didn't you? Got the train all right, Jackson?"

"Yes, sir, we've got her."

"What was it they were carrying?"

"Just as you thought, sir — machine guns."

"Ah!" the detective drew a deep breath.

"Machine guns?" echoed Murdoch.

"Exactly," Morrison said. "Allow me to introduce you to some rather interesting people. Mr. Charles Silverton and Mr. John Silverton of the

Silverway Modelling Clay Company, whose works are a few miles up the line. Otherwise Mr. Rupert d'Alvarez of Barcelona, and Herr Otto Schnitz of Cologne. The train outside is full of machine guns. They've been landing large quantities in the hope of stirring up a big revolution. What a hope! Fools! England's too fine for that and too sensible. Thanks for your help, Murdoch." He took the revolver from him and, crossing to Jackson, handed it to him. "I wasn't absolutely certain until to-night," he resumed, "but I made up my mind to get to the bottom of this — especially after you killed Heath." Morrison turned a stern look on the station-master. "Heath was the tramp they found dead — he was my friend and my best assistant. You can tell us about that, Hodgkin."

The station master quailed before the anger of his glance. "I didn't do it," he quavered. "I didn't do it. No one can prove it! It's their fault, every bit of it. Would to God I'd never touched their dirty money!"

"Shut up!" The man who had called himself Sterling menaced him with a gesture; but Saul went on desperately:

"It's all very well for you, you who haven't no wife and childer — five pound a time they paid me to run that train down from their works to the old

granite jetty and bring back their guns and such-like."

"It's a lie!"

"It bain't, and you know it! A score o' times you've done it; and now it's the likes o' me 'as to suffer. Damn you, the lot of yer!" the old man burst out.

"Got the cars all right, Jackson?" Morrison asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Take 'em away."

One of the constables seized Hodgkin by the shoulder and pushed him out, and the two men were handcuffed and led away by Jackson and the other policeman.

"I don't see it quite, even now," Mrs. Winthrop hesitated.

"It's perfectly clear, Mrs. Winthrop," Morrison explained. "We've had an eye on these people for some time. They started this clay works near here in an out-of-the-way spot to make it a distributing centre for the arms they've smuggled into the country. Almost anything can be sent around hidden in clay. I sent Heath to investigate and he was killed — murdered in this very room. These people bought over the station-master here and have been running a train about once a month from their works

to the old granite jetty just down below. Motor cars would have aroused suspicion in a quiet place like this. A Hamburg boat brought the arms here — all the rest was plain sailing."

"Then," asked Peggy, "is the whole story of the accident made up?"

"No. The accident did happen, and there is a strong local superstition about the ghost train. Most likely that gave them their idea, anyway it made their job easier because people have been taught for years to run for their lives if they hear a train in the night. The great thing was that they didn't want any one in this room to-night because the guns might be spotted or the bottom knocked out of the ghost story on which they rely, and so when the station-master couldn't get rid of us, they set about to scare us out. But they didn't do it, did they? You've all been splendid. Not forgetting the Countess." For a moment his voice took on the old fatuous Deakin tone, and there was a general murmur of apologetic laughter.

"Do you mean that every bit was a put-up job?" asked Winthrop after a pause.

"This is what happened to-night. When Saul found he couldn't get rid of us, he went off to the Silverton's house and told them we were here. The house is only half a mile away, not five. There was

no time to lose, so they jumped up and came along to put over that crazy stuff and shift us that way." His eyes dwelt sombrely for a moment on Julia's motionless form. All this time she had been sitting completely silent, as though she were barely awake from a dream.

"Then why didn't Saul send us off to Price's?" Winthrop demanded.

"Good Lord, they didn't want us there any more than here — this was their busy night!" Morrison laughed.

Mrs. Murdoch turned and looked at Julia. "But what about this poor girl? They've duped her just as they did us; frightened her with that story of the ghost train. I wonder why?"

Teddie looked at Julia again. "I shall soon find that out," he repeated quietly. "Here's Jackson — I expect he's got the other cars waiting for you, and you'd better all trot off and get to Truro and to bed." He turned to the table by the window where Miss Bourne was lying fast asleep. "We've only got one little trouble left. Here it is." He shook her gently by the shoulder. Miss Bourne showed signs of waking.

"She's moving," said Murdoch. "Hello, Miss Bourne! Better?"

Miss Bourne raised herself and looked about

her. "My head aches terribly," she remarked. "Where's my Joey?"

"Here he is." Murdoch dragged the parrot-cage out from under the table, then assisted her to rise. "There's a car waiting for us all. You'll soon be safe in Truro."

Miss Bourne breathed a sigh of relief, as she exclaimed devoutly: "Oh, I'm so glad nothing exciting has happened!"

A moment later Teddie Morrison and Julia Price were left alone.

# CHAPTER XXIX

NEITHER spoke for awhile. Julia remained seated on her chair near the dead fire, the grey cloak wrapped about her, her hands clasped loosely on her knees, her grey eyes staring straight ahead with a mystified gaze.

Morrison stood half a dozen paces away from her, looking down at her bent head intently. The game was finished — and he had won. All his most far-reaching imaginings were now proved facts. He could not help a little pleased glow when he thought of his work in the dark and how unerring his calculations had been, after all. From the moment he had caught sight of the faces of those two men as he made his escape from the house in the hollow of the hills he had known just how exactly each piece of the puzzle had fitted into the next — and how the game had been so infinitely bigger than he had ever thought until that moment. To-night, too, the gods had been on his side. And to-morrow, the Chief would know; and he felt pretty sure that this time the Chief would not be disappointed in the result of one disciple's training. What an odd game it had been all along! No actual proof — (what

was the Chief's little motto about that —" You don't want proof; think, seek, and find "). So much for Captain Edward Gascoigne Morrison, M.C., D.S.O., of the Foreign Department of the Secret Service. So much for to-morrow.

But to-night, he was Teddie Morrison the man, and alone with the girl of the grey eyes in the deserted waiting-room of the wayside Cornish Station. For four out of the five hours the little party of stranded passengers had spent on that station, Julia had been of the company, and all the time he had watched her narrowly. Not a look, not a gesture had escaped his keen eyes. And not in one single instance had he been able to detect a false note in her attitude, search for it as he might. He had convinced himself at last that her presence there, her fear of the train and the magnetism with which it yet drew her in spite of herself were as real as the train had proved itself to be. He saw now with perfect clearness how the two brothers so-called had played upon her vivid, sensitive imagination and kept her in their toils by the exploitation of that dreadful fear; how, too, it had served to veil from her their real doings and enabled them to carry on the running of the guns (the barrels of which he had discovered hidden in the clay-filled mummy-cases in

the old scientist's workshop) and the experiments with poison without suspicion on her part.

To-night, too, there was one great question to be settled by words from Julia's own lips, besides the one or two minor points which were now of so much less importance.

Going across to her, he stood at her side with folded arms; and she looked up at him, meeting the look in his eyes with an open sincerity that made him, for the thousandth time, metaphorically kick himself for doubting her, for ever having doubted her.

She rose to her feet. "I will go now," she murmured.

"Where will you go, Julia?"

She sighed. "Back to the house where my father is."

"He is better?"

"Better, but not well yet," she said with another little sigh. "I daren't think of the future for him."

It was on the tip of his tongue to utter the words: "We'll take care of him together now," but instead he said:

"There are some things I don't yet understand, Julia. You knew that the Silvertons were really Schnitz and D'Alvarez, didn't you?"

"Not quite," she replied candidly. "I thought

Schnitz and D'Alvarez were really the Silvertons; which is different. But I was afraid of them always — oh, so horribly afraid — and confused by it all. I had to do what they bade me. D'Alvarez used to make me sit for him; he modelled my head and hands in clay; and I hated it! They often forced me to do things of which I was unaware. I was only happy — and then not really — when they were not here. After they took me to Cologne and brought me back in a little tramp steamer, I hadn't seen them again till yesterday; but they were not often so long away." She paused, her brow wrinkled in thought. "I suppose it had something to do with the jewels you told me they had stolen from that Cologne studio. But even then I couldn't get my father to believe it, or to come away with me."

She spoke with a simple force, but her manner was calm, with a new strength and confidence Morrison had never seen before. It was as though she had come suddenly out of a troubled sea into calm waters and her storm-tossed soul had found haven at last. Suddenly he had a vision of the woman of the house in the valley; of a Julia binding and bathing his injured ankle, on her knees before him; a Julia carrying in the tray and dispensing the tea with a sweet gracefulness; a Julia pale with anxiety about her father's illness, and weeping bit-

terly over the death of her pet dog. All the little problems he wanted solved melted into nothingness beside these facts which he had witnessed with his own eyes. The one urgent question alone remained, and still he delayed putting it.

"Aren't you afraid of going back to that house?" he asked after a pause.

"Afraid? Now? No, never again." Her face was illumined with a wonderful smile, all the fear had vanished from her eyes. "They won't be there, and the train will never come again. You have killed fear for me, for ever."

"Tell me, Julia — tell me, I must know — why did you want me to stay, and why, afterwards, did you send me away?"

He took a step nearer, and put both his hands on her shoulders as he spoke. For a moment she did not answer.

"Because," she said at length in a low voice, "when I knew they were coming back that night I was frantic—oh, you don't know, you can't imagine how awful it was to be in the grip of that fear — always, always there!— and I thought if you stayed you would help me. You were stronger than I, stronger than they; I felt it, I knew it. And you had planned to go. So I pretended Mrs. Barrett had to leave me alone, and I prevailed on you to remain."

"And then ——?"

"And then," she murmured, "when you had your arms round me, I suddenly understood why. I recognised you fully at that moment; I knew who you were and that you would be in great danger. And I couldn't bear you to run the risk of meeting — them. In desperation I asked you to carry the tray out to the kitchen, so that you might discover the lie I told you about Mrs. Barrett and doubt me, and go. And you did doubt me — you thought I wasn't worth bothering about, and you went."

"But, Julia, my dear — why did it matter to you whether I ran into danger or not?"

He had her wholly in his arms now, and bent his head to hear the words he hoped she would speak, the words that meant so much. Julia drooped her head against his breast. "Because, then," she whispered, "I knew ——"

"Yes, Julia, yes?"

"I knew that I loved you, my dear."

THE END

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